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Jesus' Attitude to Man as Portrayed  
In the Synoptic Gospels

by

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### A. Nature of Present Study

This study is an attempt to examine the portrayal in the synoptic gospels of Jesus' attitude to man as reflected in the life he has with the people of his time.

### B. Jesus and the Gospel Records

There has been a long debate on the study of the gospels concerning the feasibility and validity of finding the historical Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The crucial point lies as in Sir Edwyn Hoskyn's words, in The Riddle of the New Testament (1931), saying: 'What was the relation between Jesus of Nazareth and the primitive Christian Church?'<sup>2</sup> There is found a valid gap between the Jesus of history and the Christ of the gospel, and the plain fact is that the gospels do not claim to give any objective uninterpreted data concerning the historical Jesus, but rather they are to confess and to witness to the Christian faith concerning this historical figure. That is, the gospel accounts are interpretations about the historical man Jesus.<sup>3</sup> But even though there exists the gap,

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1 (The History of the debate has been reviewed in the following books: A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus (1906 German, 1910 English); James M. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus 1959; and W.G. Kummel, The New Testament, the History of the Investigation of its problems (1970 German, 1972 English)

2 See pp.11, 14.

3 See also C.H. Dodd, History and the Gospel pp.13f; The Founder of Christianity pp.37ff.



this does not mean there is no link. To say the gospel accounts are interpretations, there must be some links between the historical figure and the interpretation about him. For there would not be any interpretation of Jesus if there was not the life and history of Jesus on earth. It is the task of New Testament scholars to bridge the gap.<sup>4</sup> Also we have to agree that historical facts are to be interpreted if they are to make sense for anyone. Uninterpreted historical accounts standing by themselves are insensible to us. And it would be rather meaningless if the Early Church only provided us with a package of uninterpreted historical data. Ladd has rightly remarked that, "A neutral, uncommitted, 'objective' observer could not write a gospel, for a gospel is the good news of what God has done in history....."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, an interpretation has the function to guarantee the proper understanding of the historical facts. Indeed it is the aim of the gospels to present us the most appropriate understanding concerning the historical man, Jesus. They certainly give

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4 The continuity from the life of Jesus to the Kerygma of the Church can be traced in history by the various techniques and methods of Biblical criticism. J.M. Robinson has claimed that we have in our time, for the first time since the apostolic age a second line of encounter with Jesus additional to the Kerygma. See A New Quest of the Historical Jesus p.90. He is saying that the techniques of historical, literary and form criticism do enable us to dig through the apostolic witness and come to a pre-Easter stratum which their witness has taken up and used.

5 Pattern of New Testament Truth p.47.



a canonical view of how the things happened concerning Jesus and why they were so. Uninterpreted data would not serve this function. The church even claims to have handed down the right interpretation from their first eyewitnesses so that besides their interpretation there would not be any fuller understanding concerning the historical Jesus.<sup>6</sup> That's why the gospel accounts remain as the most reliable and indispensable sources for the study of the life of Jesus. I do agree that it is not impossible from the gospels to rediscover the 'true' sayings of Jesus, as is the attempt made by Joachim Jeremias.<sup>7</sup> But as far as this paper is concerned, we shall attempt to see the portrayal of Jesus in the gospels first, instead of going further into the quest for the historical Jesus. This approach is much similar to that of Geza Vermes as stated in his book, Jesus the Jews. He goes a step further to fit the portrayal in the gospel of Jesus and his movement into the greater historical context of first centry A.D..

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6 One example we may recall is the film recently shown in H.K. entitled, 'Jesus Christ Superstar'. It is an opera (composed in 1968) based on an historical survey on the life of Jesus from a perspective other than that viewed by the Church. The opera ends up with a question, asking "Jesus Christ, Superstar, who are you? What have you sacrificed?" The writers do not understand the mission and death of Jesus. They may need the answer which the Church has long been witnessing to - that Jesus was the Messiah. This is the interpretation handed down through ages since the first eyewitnesses, and it provides us with the proper understanding concerning the historical Jesus.

7 e.g. NT Theology Vol.I. See esp. Part I. ch. 1, the argument he put forth for his search for 'the sayings of Jesus'.



Palestine.<sup>8</sup> His approach is what I would like to follow in this study. That is, first of all, build up the historical and social context of the time of Jesus, then, in the studying the portrayal of Jesus in the gospels, put it into this greater context. This may in turn justify their reliability of the portrayal of Jesus. I would agree also with G.E. Ladd's argument for the relationship of Jesus and the apostolic witness of the Church. He says: "The Gospels are a record of the historical event of Jesus Christ, whose revelational and redemptive meaning is interpreted first by the words of Jesus himself, and further by the prophetic-apostolic witness of the Church."<sup>9</sup> That is, the gospel writers did not invent the gospel by themselves. It was Jesus himself who interpreted his life and death as fulfilling the messianic promise of the Old Testament, and the gospel writers only attempt to make this fact more intelligible for the readers.<sup>10</sup> Assuming this as a fact, I am here studying the portrayal of the life and the

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8 See p.42 and n. He is saying that instead of treating Jewish literature as an ancillary to the NT as has been done by many, he now attempts the contrary, hoping that 'such an immersion in historical reality would confer the credibility on the Gospel picture.'

9 See The Pattern of NT Truth. pp.46f

10 For the self-understanding of the Jesus' own Messianic mission, see also C.H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures. Also for the same argument, I quote here the words of Sir Edwyn Hoskyns: "The Theologians of the NT, then, are not moving in a world of their own idea..... No doubt it is their own spiritual and



attitude of Jesus as seen from the synoptic gospels.

### C. The Synoptic Gospels

No one can attempt any study on the synoptic gospels seriously without acknowledging the fact of the literary relationship - both agreements and disagreements - between the three gospels.<sup>11</sup> This is what is called 'The Synoptic Problem'.<sup>12</sup> I do not intend to go too deeply into the problem but I should here present some of the views I have taken in this paper. It has been generally accepted that Mark represents the common source for the narrative materials of Matthew and Luke, as the earliest account of the three gospels. And of the saying materials, Matthew and Luke share together from another common

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moral experience which enables them to appreciate the significance of the history and to lay it bare; no doubt also considerable theological development results from their endeavour to extract its meaning; but neither their experience nor their theologizing has created the history ....." The Riddle of The NT pp.244f.

11 I do not include the Gospel of John within this study for this simple reason that it does not share in anything, either in agreements or disagreements concerning the literary relationship among the other gospels. Further, the Gospel of John witnesses to another strikingly different context, with newer terminology used, such as 'eternal life', 'new birth' etc. which are non-existent in the other gospels. 'Eternal life' only found once in the synoptic gospels in Mt 19:16 // Mk 10:17 // Lk 18:18, is frequently spoken of by Jesus in John's Gospel.

12 'Synoptic', from the Greek word *σύνοψις*, 'of common views'. For the study into the synoptic problem, W.G. Kummel has presented a detailed and relevant discussion on the topic; see Introduction to The NT, Part I sect.5, pp.33-60. For a simpler and more general discussion, see Donald Guthrie's NT Introduction ch.5, pp.121-187.



source, Q, Quelle = Source.<sup>13</sup> If Mark is taken as the earliest gospel of the three, then Matthew and Luke can be taken as revision or reediting of the Marcan account. If we compare the whole structure of the gospels separately, we will find that Matthew follows largely from Mark, and only at certain points does he insert several blocks of his own materials.<sup>14</sup> He has also sometimes considerably abbreviates the Marcan narratives.<sup>15</sup> Luke, on the other hand, makes his own structure independently of Mark and only uses Marcan materials whenever it suits him.<sup>16</sup> By comparing the structure and the literary style of the different gospels, we can then detect their specific intentions behind their writings. It is also due to the development of form criticism and redaction criticism that we are now able to see the significance of the theological and literary presuppositions and tendencies behind the writing of the gospels. By studying the agreements and disagreements in

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13 This is what is called 'the two sources hypothesis which is later expanded to four sources hypothesis, on the basis of the distinct materials found in Luke and Matthew separately as peculiar to their own gospels. The four sources hypothesis has commonly accepted by many, such as Streeter, J. Jeremias, V. Taylor et.al. For details, see Kummel Introduction to The NT pp.37-40.

14 e.g. Mt 1-2, 5-7, 18:10-35, 23, 25 etc.

15 For example, cf. Mt 9:1-8 // Mk 2:1-12, the story of how the paralytic was brought to Jesus.

16 Luke should be taken together with the Book of Acts as a two volume work formally dedicated 'to Theophilus', see Lk 1:1-3, Act 1:1-2. Luke relates the life of Jesus and the Early Church to the course of world events, see Lk 1:5, 2:1, 3:1, Act. 11:28, 18:2, thus building the structure into a larger historical setting.



the three different accounts, we may finally realize the different intentions behind their formulations. For instance, comparing Matthew with the other two gospels, we can detect these following literary characteristics: that Matthew likes to shorten narratives,<sup>17</sup> and emphasizes much on the teachings of Jesus.<sup>18</sup> He is fond of using the numbers three<sup>19</sup> and seven.<sup>20</sup> As to the theological concern, Matthew deliberately portrays Jesus as 'The son of David',<sup>21</sup> as 'the one who is to come, i.e. the Messiah',<sup>22</sup>. He also pictures the addresses of

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17 e.g. Mt 9:1-8 // Mk 2:1-12 // Lk 5:17-26.

18 e.g. The five great blocks of teaching of Jesus in Mt 5-7, 10, 18, 23, 25.

19 e.g. Mt 1:17 Genealogy of Jesus in threefold divisions; Joseph received the message from the angel of the Lord three times, Mt 1:20, 2:13, 2:19; Jesus told three parables before the authorities in Jerusalem, Mt 21:28 - 22:14; cf. also the Marcan and Lucan accounts. Matthew has deliberately recorded three here; also the parables of on judgement, Mt 25; and three questions raised by Pilate, Mt 27:11, 13, 22 etc.

20 e.g. Mt 13, the seven parables of the kingdom of Heaven; Mt 23 the seven Woes to the scribes and the pharisees; also the question of Peter about forgiveness, the answer is Seventy times Seven. Mt 18:21f. It is not simply accidental but it's fit to Matthew's literary style; it is also easy for memory.

21 The term has been more frequently used by Matthew e.g. The genealogy pictures him as the descendant of David, Mt 1:1-17. Several times people cried out to acknowledge him with the title, Mt 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30f, 21:9,15. Esp. 15:22 // cf. Mk 7:26, 12:23 and 21:15 peculiar to Matthew, signifies also as contrast to the attitudes of the religious leaders and the authorities on Jesus, see also 12:24, 21:15b.

22 e.g. Mt 11:3ff Matthew paves the way for the answer to John's question, as Mt 8-10 recalls of the various healing stories of Jesus to witness to the fact that he is the Messiah they are waiting for. See also latter discussion in ch.3 pp.72ff.



disciples to Jesus as 'Lord', an address distinguished from the general acknowledgement of him as 'Teacher' and 'Rabbi'.<sup>23</sup> Thus by comparing their various differences, we can detect their distinct theological and literary presuppositions and tendencies. Here, another point should be explicitly stated. Many form critics have treated the gospel materials as fragmentary and as miscellaneous collections which are to be dissected, sorted in some other way for reconstruction, but they seem to have neglected a significant point that each gospel is by itself of a literary and theological entity. C.H. Dodd has rightly demanded a new recognition of the unity of the New Testament,<sup>24</sup> and the same is needed for the recognition of the unique character of each of the synoptic gospels. This is as suggested by Samuel Sandmel in his article on 'Prolegomena to a Commentary on Mark': "But the really insistent question is, what is Mark as a totality?..... The first step is the reading of the totality, with no attention to the pericope parallels; next, one studies the pericopes, for the differences in a pericope common to two or more Gospels will disclose for us, as dye does for the microscope, things we might otherwise miss; there-

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23 e.g. Mt 8:21,25, 14:30, 17:4,15, 18:21 etc. Esp. Mt 8:25 cf.// Mk 4:38 and Mt 17:15 cf.// Mk 9:17 where Mark uses 'Teacher', Matthew has 'Lord' instead. In fact, Matthew says he is more than a teacher. Mt 7:29.

24 See The Present Task in New Testament studies pp.32ff. As to reference for redaction criticism, see also J. Rodhe's book, Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists.



after, however, one must return to the Gospel as a totality."<sup>25</sup>

Also besides the fact that we do obviously see the existence of diversity among the synoptic gospels, yet we ought to remember still that there exists a unity within the diversity among the gospels. As we will find in our study, though the three gospels vary much in various ways in both narratives and teachings of Jesus, yet marvellous enough they are altogether portraying Jesus in quite a unique way. As Dodd has once commented, after his recognition of the diversities existing among the three gospels and even other limiting factors as human fallibility are taken into consideration he still remarks: "..... it remains that the first three gospels offer a body of sayings on the whole so consistent, so coherent, and withal so distinctive in manner, style and content, that no reasonable critic should doubt..... that we find reflected here the thought of a single, unique teacher."<sup>26</sup>

This is the unique character of Jesus that in this paper we are attempting to see. And in looking at the portrayal of Jesus in the synoptic gospels, we attempt to see especially his relationship with the people of his time so as to seek for his unique attitude towards men in their different social statuses.

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25 See his article in NT Issues (ed. by Richard Batey) pp.51f.

26 See The Founder of Christianity p.33.



#### D. Method of Study

So in the following chapters, I will attempt to study first the social, political and religious background of Jesus' time. This is to define the context where Jesus was before we seek to see his relationship with other people of his time. Then, in the next two chapters, I will go on to study Jesus' relationship with the various groups of people. I will roughly classify them into two groups, 'the Poor' and 'the Rich' (the precise definition for these two groups will be developed in that two chapters). What I am trying to find from the study is the attitudes Jesus has to the various people with their different social statuses so that in the final chapter I may make some reflections on the attitudes of our churches today. As Christians we are followers of Christ and the children of God that should behave like the father, as has been revealed in the life of Jesus. So we should have the same attitudes towards man as Jesus had on earth; and, as Paul teaches us "Have the same mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). So let us learn from this mind of Jesus as it has witnessed by the Early Church and as is portrayed by the gospel writers.

## Chapter II THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF JESUS' TIME

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Before we go into the portrayal of Jesus in the gospels, it is necessary to have acquaintance with the society where Jesus spent his life. Especially significant for our study is the political, social and religious setting of his time.<sup>1</sup>

#### A. The Political Setting

To begin with the political situation of the time, we may start from the death of Herod the Great who was king over Judea from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C.. At his death, he left his domain to three of his sons: Archelaus, Philip and Herod Antipas. Archelaus (4 B.C. - A.D. 6) inherited the southern part of Palestine, embracing Samaria, Judea and Idumea and was entitled 'ethnarch' instead of 'king'. Philip (4 B.C. - A.D. 34) received the northern and north-eastern part of Palestine, including Ituraea and Trachonitis.<sup>2</sup> He was entitled 'tetrarch' (= ruler of a fourth part), a title carrying even less prestige than that of ethnarch. He rebuilt a city in his region and

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1 For this part, I will not go into the study of the source materials such as the Rabbinic Literature, Talmud and Mishnah, the Dead Sea Scrolls (or the Qumran writings) as well as other Jewish literature like those of Josephus and Philo. It is beyond my ability to have independent study on those materials or I would be writing a thesis on the background rather than on the gospels. Thus I am obliged here to the work done by J. Jeremias, F.F. Bruce, B.M. Metzger, Daniel-Rops ..... et.al. Their materials have been found very helpful for the understanding of the background at the time of Jesus.

2 cf. Lk 3:1

called it Caesarea in honor of the emperor; it was later known as 'Caesarea Philippi', where Jesus visited once during his ministry (Mk 8:27). Herod Antipas (4 B.C. - A.D. 40), on the other hand, was the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. He was ruling over the region of Galilee at the time of Jesus, hence he is the one constantly referred to in the gospels as 'Herod'.<sup>3</sup> The province, Galilee, was to a large degree 'constituted an autonomous and self-contained politico-ethnic unit', where the Roman rule was absent on the scene.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that Galilee was the place famously known for giving birth to the Zealotic movements,<sup>5</sup> yet the place to some extent, did enjoy peace inside, since there was almost no tremendous revolt or unrest on serious scale as compared with troubles found in Jerusalem. Herod was the tetrarch for over forty years.

A totally different scene was found in Jerusalem. Archelaus, on the ninth year of his reign (A.D. 6) was dethroned by the Roman Emperor and was exiled to Gaul, leaving Judea

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3 e.g. Mk 6:14, Lk 3:1, 13:31, 23:7, Mt 14:1,3,5ff etc.

4 See reference in Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew ch.2 'Jesus and Galilee' pp.44f.

5 e.g. the famous hero, Judas the Galilean. See also later discussions of the zealotic movements pp.16f.



from then on as a Roman province, directly under the rule of a Roman Governor, headed as the prefect of the place. During the ministry of Jesus, Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor (A.D. 26 - 36), the one under whom Jesus was tried and put to death.<sup>6</sup> After the changing scene of Judea in A.D. 6, there existed great nationalistic fervour among the Jews, in Judea and in Galilee as well, against the Roman rule. The resentment among the Jews in Judea may be due to the heavy taxation that was imposed on them by the Romans. Especially the Jews in Jerusalem, since before that time, had been paying dues to the Temple which was already heavy for them. Now, the coming of the Romans had doubled their burdens. In addition to their paying dues to the Temple, they were now asked to pay tribute to the Emperor, without any relief of the former. Actually, the payment of the two sets of dues were calculated with complete disregard of each other.<sup>7</sup> Jews might be willing enough to pay the temple due as a service to God, but they would by no means accept such taxation demanded by the Romans. That was why they had great resentment against them. During the ministry of Jesus, he has once been asked of question of paying tax to Caesar. (Mt 22:16f) This was one of the lively questions

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6 For scriptural references: read Mt 27:2 // Mk 15:1 // Lk 23:1.

7 See F.F. Bruce NT History pp.36f.



in the hearts of the people. The Jews outside Judea shared also their resentment against Rome for the mere fact that their nationalist fervour would not allow any foreign rule. The feeling was more intensified among those pious Jews who believed that YHWH alone should be their king. Such belief gave birth to the zealotic movement headed by the famous hero, Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:37). Judas stirred up rebellion against the Romans in A.D. 6 for the simple reason that only God would be the true king over them.<sup>8</sup> They refused to obey any earthly monarch, so they fought to remove the Roman rule. They carried out Guerilla warfare against the Romans, to struggle for their political freedom. Luke has recalled an attempt of them at revolt in Jerusalem (Lk 13:4). Some of the insurgents had occupied the tower of Siloam but were then killed in its fall when the Romans undermined it. This was only one of the many incidents that happened especially around Passover time, due to the constantly underlying movements of the zealots. The movement was first started by Judas the Galilean and his two sons, Jacob and Simon continued the

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8 The word 'zealots' (Greek = ζηλωτής ) bears originally the meaning of one who is zealous for God. See Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and other early Christian Literature p.338. Thus, they were so-called because of their zeal for God. For the whole movement of the zealots, see F.F. Bruce, History pp.88ff.



leadership for over sixty years, so that later, the 'Galileans' together with the word 'zealots' took on a dark political connotation as 'the revolutionaries'.<sup>9</sup> This reminds us of one of the disciples of Jesus entitled 'Simon the zealot' which means 'the Simon who belongs to the political party of the zealots'.<sup>10</sup> There has also been a theory recently put forth by scholars that Jesus might be one of the zealots.<sup>11</sup> Whether Jesus was one or not - it is hard to tell; yet it was highly probable that Jesus was seen as a political rebel in the eyes of the authorities in Jerusalem merely because he was a Galilean, highly susceptible to be a revolutionary. He was easily labelled so, especially when he was at that time preaching of the coming of the kingdom of God, which would fit in well with the ideals of the zealots of his time.<sup>12</sup>

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9 See the discussion in Geza Vermes, Jesus the Jew p.47f also p.55 where he adds, "in the rabbinic quotations, the qualification 'Galilean' is synonymous with a cursed, lawless rabble."

10 Lk 6:15. See E.E. Ellis's comment in The Gospel of Luke p.111; read also Mt 10:4 // Mk 3:19 where it says - 'Simon the Cananean'. David Hill has rightly commented that 'Cananean' can hardly indicate geographical origin, rather the Hebrew word קנן means 'zealous'. See The Gospel of Matthew p.183. This confirms the right interpretation of Luke.

11 A full discussion can be seen in S.G.F. Brandon's book, Jesus and The Zealots (Manchester University Press, 1967, and Scribner, N.Y.).

12 For the discussion, see also Geza Vermes, op.cit pp.46-57.



Alongside the zealots who took the most active part in rebellion against the Roman rule, there stands also the political and social leaders in Jerusalem. They were the authorities in the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council at Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> Their main concern was to keep the status quo so that they would uphold their existing authority. Thus, on the one hand, they would strive hard to safeguard their authority from any interference by the Romans. And, on the other hand, they might fear any revolutionary movements or anything which would arouse revolutionary sentiments of the people that would lead to the coming of the Roman troops to take over the place. For this reason and for the reason of the popularity of Jesus among the mob that they rather decided to put Jesus to death. John has indeed given us this report:

"So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, 'What are we to do?..... If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.' But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.'" (Jn 11:48ff)

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<sup>13</sup> For the composition and the function of the Sanhedrin, we will discuss them later, see pp.21ff.

For the tension existing between the authorities and the Romans, we may recall an incident to illustrate the point. It was the clash between the authorities and Pontius Pilate who was at that time the Roman governor over Judea. At that time, Pilate was attempting a construction work to augment the water supply in Jerusalem. It was indeed a good work of Pilate and would benefit much the people in Jerusalem, especially the Temple which required a large amount of water supply. But the clash came because Pilate demanded the payment to be made from the Temple treasury. To this, the Temple authorities strongly protested for the simple reason that it was inappropriate to use the temple money for such a secular purpose. But Pilate insisted and raided the temple treasury. The authorities mobilized their indignant crowds in protest against this act, but unfortunately their protest was forcibly torn down by the troops of Pilate.<sup>14</sup> By this, the authorities also experienced the disregard on the part of the Roman rulers for the sacred status of their Jerusalem temple so that they in turn shared with the multitudes their great resentment towards the Romans. Nevertheless, in the case of Jesus as a political rebel, they would rather sacrifice him for the sake of the whole nation. They

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<sup>14</sup> The story was told by Josephus in Jewish War, ii pp.175-7, Antiquities, xviii p.62. See also F.F. Bruce, History p.34.



went up to Pilate and asked him to put Jesus to death.<sup>15</sup>

Another group may as well be mentioned here. They are the Herodians. They were actually not to be counted as a religious group or a political party, but were only representative of the attitude of some of the Jews of high standings who supported the Herodian rule.<sup>16</sup> By their support of the Herodian rule, they hence supported also the Romans, by whose authority the Herodian dynasty was maintained. So they stood rather strangely aside of the great multitude and the authorities in their attitude towards the Romans. However, with regard to the prevailing attitudes of most Jews towards the Romans, we may expect here that the Herodians must be in meagre minority.

#### B. The Social Setting

For the social setting of Jesus time, we may separate for convenience's sake into two parts, which together constitute the two distinct groups with whom Jesus had frequent relationship. They are the authorities in Jerusalem and the common mass in Galilee.

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15 Read Mt 27:2 // Mk 15:1 // Lk 23:1. Dr. Paul Winter has argued for the shared responsibility between Pilate and the authorities as well, so that their responsibilities would not be denied. See On the Trial of Jesus p.147 and preceding pages. Thus both groups might have their common interests which brought them together to make for the death of Jesus.

16 That's why they were called 'the Herodians'. See B.M. Metzger The NT, its Background, growth and content p.44.



The authorities in Jerusalem centred in the supreme council at the Sanhedrin. It was the legislative, executive and judiciary council for the Jewish people in Jerusalem. It consisted of seventy-one members,<sup>17</sup> and fell into three groups: the chief priests, scribes and the elders.<sup>18</sup> They are altogether representative of the authorities in Jerusalem. The first group was the chief priests. The group was not confined to the high priest and those who are of the high priestly family, but were those who held authoritative power at the Sanhedrin council.<sup>19</sup> They had a unique status in society for they were to look after the Temple services and the sacral duties. For this, they were highly respected and

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17 Seventy members plus the High priest who presides over the council.

18 For the specific usage of these terms in the synoptics, see Appendix I.

19 The Greek word ἀρχιερεῖς = high priests or here = chief priests was frequently used in plural form in the gospels even though there was only one High priest at a time in office. E. Schurer has suggested that ἀρχιερεῖς in plural as referring to all who were of the high-priestly family, but Jeremias has corrected him rightly in saying that it was referring to a group of priests not exclusively of the high-priestly family but as a group who held authoritative power over decisions in the Sanhedrin. He says that in fact it was a well-defined body, composed of the permanent chief priests of the Temple ..... i.e. the captain of the Temple, the Temple overseer, three treasurers, the presiding high priest plus the retired high priests. They constituted the group whom the gospel writers frequently referred to as the ἀρχιερεῖς. See Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus pp.175-179.



they constituted a significant part of the Sanhedrin up to the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. Especially when Judea had become a Roman province in A.D. 6, the chief priests, together with other members in the Sanhedrin served as the principal agent of the people and were to be ultimately responsible to the Roman governor. Yet though they had the privileges of managing the Temple under the divine will, they did not keep it according to what the Lord demanded. It was Jesus' comment to them that, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations. But you have made it a den of robbers." (Mk 11:17). The second group was the elders. Originally they were the leaders and heads of the families and they functioned as the representatives of the people.<sup>20</sup> According to Jeremias' findings, they were, at the time of Jesus, the heads of the most influential rich land-owning families.<sup>21</sup> The fact that in addition most of them took their theological stand as Sadducees, so siding with many of the chief priests,<sup>22</sup> which made their

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20 cf. Ezra 5:5,9ff.

21 Read Jeremias, Jerusalem ch.9. The Lay Nobility pp.222-232, esp. p.222n. tells of the wider sense of the word 'elder' to mean the non-priestly member of the Sanhedrin, e.g. Mt 21:23, 26:3,47, Lk 22:52. Thus the word in its wider sense includes also 'the Scribes' in the Sanhedrin, but here I am going to separate 'the elders' from 'the scribes' and take the word in its narrower sense - the distinction as it was taken also by Jeremias.

22 In fact, the party of the Sadducees at that time was made up of the chief priests and the elders. Thus, they were lay Sadducees. See *ibid.* pp.228f.



influence overshadowed most affairs in the Sanhedrin. In fact, almost two-third of the members in the Sanhedrin belonged to the party of Sadducees. Thus their influence even over-shadowed most affairs of the Jewish people in Jerusalem. In the synoptics, we can find all the time the elders were mentioned together with the chief priests or as members of the whole group in Sanhedrin, so that the comments Jesus made about them fell in with those about the chief priests and the people in authority. The third group was the scribes. They were the ordained teachers, the rabbis, and the authorized interpreters of Law. It was their knowledge alone which gave them power to be called the scribes and be included in the Sanhedrin.<sup>23</sup> For anyone to be a scribe, he had to pursue a regular course of study for several years, to master the traditional interpretations of the Law and the 'halakic' method. Only after he had gone through this thorough study of the Torah could he then be ordained as a member into the company of scribes. They were, in modern terms, the theologians of the time who could master the whole traditions of their religious heritage. Moreover, they were the authorized interpreters of the Law, and also on matters of religious legislation and civil judgements in court

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23 For the background and the rise of the scribes, see also Jeremias, Jerusalem pp.233-245.



or to an individual. That was why they were highly honored. They were venerated like the prophets of the old for the special knowledge they claimed to have and their words were taken as having divine authority.<sup>24</sup> We even have passages in the synoptic gospels telling us how the scribes were respected in the time of Jesus. We hear that they were greeted on the street as 'Rabbi',<sup>25</sup> as 'Father',<sup>26</sup> and as 'Master',<sup>27</sup>; and the highest places at feasts were kept specially for them.<sup>28</sup> The three groups mentioned above constituted the members of the Sanhedrin. They are together representatives of the authorities in Jerusalem, and especially during the last week's ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem, they did have serious clashes with him. In chapter IV, we will examine more closely what clashes Jesus had with them.

Besides the authorities in Jerusalem whom Jesus had had associations with the other social segment were the common mass in Galilee. For Jesus had spent most of his ministry in preaching the good news to this segment of people in Galilee. It was only in his last journey into Jerusalem that he had his conflicts with the authorities there. These two segments form

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24 See also *ibid*, pp.241-243.

25 Mk 12:38, Mt 23:7, Lk 20:46 etc.

26 Mt 23:9.

27 Mt 23:10,16 etc.

28 Mt 23:6, Mk 12:39 etc.



two different groups for the ministry of Jesus. And in the following chapters, we will examine the portrayal of Jesus as according to these two distinct segments too.

For the common mass in the time of Jesus, one may ask: What was the basis of social stratification of that time? In fact, it was based upon wealth. As Daniel Rops has rightly remarked: "It is a striking fact that nowhere in the New Testament is there a reference to a distinction as between what we would call gentle and simple or nobles and commoners; but on the other hand one continually finds rich and poor."<sup>29</sup> The distinction for the social classes was simply 'the rich and the poor'. And we can also find many of the gospel parables have to do with status based upon wealth. For instance, the parable of a rich fool (Lk 12:15-21) and the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31) etc. Most of the wealthy people were those in authority. We have also mentioned the elders, who, Jeremias comments, were in fact heads of the rich land-owning families.<sup>30</sup> It was simply because they were rich that they could acquire such a high status in society.<sup>31</sup> However

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29 See Daily Life in Palestine at the Time of Christ, p.140.

30 See above p.22

31 e.g. Joseph of Arimathea, cf. Mk 15:43 // Mt 27:57 // Lk 23:50f. Mark says he was a respected member of the council while Matthew says he was a rich man. Jeremias remarks indeed he was a rich land owner. Yet he was neither a priest nor a scribe, so would it not possible that it was his wealth that made him as a respected member in the council.



we should be reminded that most of the common mass were not rich but rather were very poor. To recall the words again of Daniel-Rops:-

"The great mass of the people of Israel, then, was made up of the workers on the land and the workers at the various trades, the am ha-arez<sup>32</sup> and the slaves..... One should never forget that in Israel at that period there existed a proletariat: and even a class below that, made up of ill-paid workers, day-labourer with unemployment hanging over their heads, down-trodden am ha-arez, more or less circumcised slaves, freedmen whose master would not always give them that little sum that the Law desired them to give, beggars, poverty-stricken in the streets, and it must be remembered, lepers and cripples for whom there was no hospitals."<sup>33</sup>

The description provides a clear picture of the life of the common mass in Jesus' days. It also reminds us of the gospel stories which give like impression concerning life of the people. For the kinds of people frequently mentioned in the ministry of Jesus were: the blind, the sick, the lame, the lepers, the beggars and the slaves. There has also been an incident telling us of a woman who has lost one coin, yet even

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32 The Hebrew word אֲמֵהָאָרֶץ literally = people of the land, was a word for the common mass. It has a specific religious connotation also. We shall go into that in the section under the 'religious setting of Jesus time' pp.37f.

33 Read pp.151, 158.

spends hours lighting the lamp and searching the house for it. (Lk 15:8). That reminds us that most of the people at that time were indeed very poor. Yet Jesus spends almost all of his time preaching good news to them, to this common mass of the people.

Three specific groups needed to be mentioned here. The first was 'the Samaritans'.<sup>34</sup> The Samaritans were regarded as a mixed-blood race. Ever since the Assyrian deportation in 722 B.C., the Jews had to live in Palestine together with the Gentiles. The result was inter-marriages between Jews and Gentiles, and a syncretism of Jewish and pagan worship. So after the Exile, when those pure-blood Jews returned to Palestine those mixed-blood Jews were regarded by their fellow Jews as 'the Samaritans', and were treated by them the same as 'the Gentiles'. They were despised by the pure blood Jews and were rejected as regard to the rights to be the people of God. Together with the Gentiles, they were even looked down upon as 'dogs' (Mt 15:26). And when John says: "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (4:9), Jeremias comments that he was speaking of truth of the time.<sup>35</sup> Only against this background can we fully appreciate Jesus' attitude towards the Samaritans that he has preached to them the good news (Jn 4:1-42),

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34 For detail reference, see Jeremias, Jerusalem pp.352-58.

35 See op.cit p.358.



and in his teachings, he has put forth the picture of a good Samaritan over against the selfishness of those chief priests and Levites. (Lk 10:30-37) Though they were greatly despised by the Jews, yet Jesus demonstrated his concern for and even praised them.<sup>36</sup> The second group we should mention here is 'the women'. It seems strange that we have put them as a distinct social group, but the fact was at that time 'the women' were thought of so. They were to be subordinate and even looked down upon by men.<sup>37</sup> Their religious duties were limited, and so were their religious rights. In the Temple, they were not allowed to go further than into the courts of the Gentiles and of women; in the synagogue, they were not only separated from the men but were also required to set behind barriers of lattice.<sup>38</sup> In liturgical service, they were there simply to listen and women were forbidden to teach too.<sup>39</sup> The Rabbinic teachings has recalled such sayings:-

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36 See also Lk 9:52, 17:11-19, we will go into this in ch.3.

37 For detail reference, read also Jeremias, op.cit., pp.359-376.

38 ibid. pp.373f.

39 ibid.; no wonder we find also in Paul's epistle this same tradition was in his mind, saying, "the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says." I Cor.15:34.

"One should not converse with a woman, not even with one's own wife; women are greedy eaters, curious listeners, indolent, jealous and frivolous; 'Many women, much witchcraft' 'Ten cabs of garoulousness descended upon the world, nine came down upon the women, one upon the rest of the world.' 'Blessed is he whose children are male, and woe to him whose children are female.'"<sup>40</sup>

Though it seems a bit exaggerating, yet the kind of feeling toward women can be clearly seen. Only against this background can we really appreciate Jesus' attitude toward women as persons. It was indeed a radical act when he was talking with women,<sup>41</sup> healing their diseases,<sup>42</sup> and even making open friendship with them.<sup>43</sup> All these took on a remarkable challenge to the status quo of his time. The last group we should mention also under this section is 'the Tax-collectors'. They were distinctive not only as a social group but also as a religious group to be associated with 'the sinners'. But still as a social group, they were not to be welcomed by the people. 'Tax-collector' was not a neutral term describing their office, but rather it was a black-name for the typical character of those in office. It has been argued whether the

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40 As quoted in G. Harkness, Women in Church and Society p.157.

41 See also Jn 4:17 "They marvelled that he was talking with a woman."

42 e.g. Mk 1:29-31 //s, Mk 5:21-43 & // s, Lk 13:10-17..... etc.

43 e.g. Lk 8:2-3, 10:38-42..... etc.



'Tax-collectors' mentioned in the gospels was a mistaken word for τελώνης.<sup>44</sup> The problem is whether the blackname given to them was for the reason of their dishonesty as Jeremias has suggested or for the reason of their being traitors in serving the Romans (as Perrin has suggested)? It is perhaps that Jeremias' suggestion fits in well with the background for the Galilean ministry of Jesus, since 'the tax-collectors' there were not serving the Romans but rather they were notoriously famous for their dishonesty and greediness for money.<sup>45</sup> Perrin's idea, on the other hand, may only fit into the situation at Jerusalem where the tax-collectors were having association with the Romans. This further reason if applied to the tax-collectors may then be of a latter interpretation. So for those tax-collectors with whom Jesus had made friendship,<sup>46</sup> the accusation against them or the reason for their being rejected by the people was simply because they were dishonest.<sup>47</sup> For this reason, they were greatly despised,

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44 The two main arguments are put forth representatively by Perrin and Jeremias. A thorough discussion and review of their arguments have been done by J.R. Donahue, "Tax-collectors and Sinners: an attempt at identification", Catholic Biblical Quarterly Vol.23 1971. pp.39-61.

45 cf. Lk 18:11 The referring to 'tax-collector' in the prayer of the pharisee - as an example of dishonesty. See also *ibid.*

46 'toll collector' may be a better word for the translation of as regard to the gospel description of their character.

47 See Lk 3:12f, the answer of John suggests good evidence



especially by the Pharisees as they were, in their eyes, inevitably unclean by their office. Yet again, though they were despised, we find in the gospels that Jesus did have friendship with them. He even had have table-fellowship with them and had lodging in their houses.<sup>48</sup>

### C. The Religious Setting

Thirdly, for the religious setting of Jesus' time, there were two great camps of theologians dominating the time of Jesus. The Sadducees party was composed largely of the authorities as we have mentioned before. They were mostly the chief priests, the elders and some of the scribes.<sup>49</sup> Theologically, they held strictly to the literal interpretation of the Torah; in particular on the matter of cultus and priesthood. This made them different from the theologies of the Pharisees who had a more open and liberal view of interpretation. Thus, theologically, the Sadducees were even more conservative. In the ministry of Jesus, he seldom had conflicts with people on the mere ground of their Sadducean theology. He did have conflict with those people only on the basis of his

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that the tax-collectors were suspect of dishonesty.

48 See discussion in ch.3.

49 'Scribes' was the terms of 'teacher of the Law'. They may be either the Sadducean scribes who interpreted the law from the Sadducean point of view or some were belonging to the party of the Pharisees, e.g. Lk 5:17,23,30. Concerning the composition of the Sadducean party, read also Jeremias' Jerusalem pp.228ff.



criticism on their being as the authorities in Jerusalem yet not fulfilling the demands of the Lord.<sup>50</sup> Only once when he was questioned by some of the Sadducees on the question on resurrection from the dead;<sup>51</sup> and once he was mentioning: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."<sup>52</sup> But elsewhere, we do not find direct conflict of Jesus with their Sadducean theology. Rather, to the second camp of theologies we should pay more attention. It was the theology of the party of the Pharisees which we find more frequently mentioned as contrasting to Jesus' view. Probably the Sadducean theology was centred at Jerusalem as among the authorities there, yet in the large part of Jesus' ministry, he was travelling around the villages of Galilee, where the Pharisaic theology was more prevalent. That's why we find a lot of the conflict stories found in the gospels concerned with the latter group. Who were the Pharisees? We may begin by recalling the

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50 For example: The conflict stories in the last week at Jerusalem. See also ch.4.

51 Lk 20:27-40 & //s. Here also the question lies as a part of the series of questions the authorities put forth for Jesus. They brought forth this theologically most controversial question for Jesus to answer, however, the point really lies here, Jesus did answer their questions skillfully and afterwards they dared not ask him any question, cf. Lk 20:40.

52 Mt 16:6. The saying was uttered after the test by the Pharisees and Sadducees asking Jesus to show them a sign from heaven. cf. Mk 8:11-13 & 15, 'the Pharisees' and 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Herodians'.



emergence of the "Pharisaic movement" within Judaism.<sup>53</sup> It was in the beginning of the Maccabean wars, c 162 B.C., that among the priesthood was a group of priests. They started this 'Pharisaic movement'. Based on the belief that the Torah if was given by God, should be able to be kept, those priests attempted to extend the possibility of holiness to all men. Thus while in former time the Law has set up rules of purity for the officiating priests alone, they now made it into a general practice in the life of all people. The movement did receive great support from the people. For indeed it was a drastic move towards the attempt for the realization of the Kingdom of God. That is, the people of Israel was called for obedience to the Law so that they could now live and build up

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Cranfield in the Commentary on St. Mark has pointed out that Mt 16:6 would probably be secondary. See p.261. Would the Sadducees be there in the country-side Galilee or would it rather be out of Matthew's catechetical interest that he put 'the teaching of the Sadducees' here. See also Fenton, St. Matthew p.261. David Hill, The Gospel of Matthew p.257.

- 53 The term 'Pharisee' was used so frequently that it has carried varied meanings. It results in the difficulty to relate the sayings about Jesus with the Pharisees as referred to in the rabbinic literatures. J. Bowker has resolved the difficulty by separating the meaning of 'Pharisees' from 'perushim', the latter being a black-name to describe those extreme separatists. He has also commented that 'Pharisees' as used in the gospels was actually a term for those extreme separatists, = 'perushim' as used in rabbinic literatures. Read Jesus and the Pharisees pp. 1-15.



the 'true Israel', a 'holy community' worthy of the calling.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the realization which most people in the post-exilic time waited for its coming in future, was now as taught by this movement to be visualized at present state in one's effecting absolute obedience to the law in practical life. Thus this movement was an attempt to actualize the fulfillments of the law and those who joined in this movement were 'the Pharisees'.<sup>55</sup> During the ministry of Jesus, we find many conflicts arose out of the different views Jesus had as contrary to those Pharisees. Yet, here we should remember that the criticisms upon 'the Pharisees' were not laid upon the whole movement but only a part of the people who are within this movement. Here, we may recall John Bowker's comment to guard for any wrong interpretations. The Hebrew word פְּרֻשִׁים could be written as either 'Pharisees' or 'perushim' with the same meaning as 'the separate ones'.<sup>56</sup> Their distinctive senses can be detected in the study of the rabbinic literatures. As has been noted by J. Bowker, it has been found that the rabbis were constantly referring to 'the

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54 The community was known as the *habura* community, the holy community of Jerusalem which was formerly exclusively used for the priests alone.

55 For the Pharisaic movement, see also Jeremias, Jerusalem pp.246-267.

56 'Pharisaic' may be from Greek languages sources. e.g. the NT and Josephus' literature; and 'perushim' is from the Semitic language sources, e.g. the rabbinic sources. Yet

Pharisees' as their predecessors; thus the term was used in the good sense. On the contrary, the rabbis did attack certain groups within the movement as 'the perushim', as violently as the pharisees were attacked in the New Testament. 'The perushim' as criticized by the rabbis are those who were going too far as to separate themselves as more holy than the others. And in this case, the term was used in a condemnatory sense. Thus it provides us with the two different senses as were conveyed by the two terms, one is in the good sense as 'Pharisees' and the other 'perushim' as in the condemnatory sense. 'The Pharisees', as used in the gospels, was obviously in the condemnatory sense of 'perushim' as used in the rabbinic literatures. For this, J. Bowker has also rightly commented that Jesus was himself sharing the rabbinic charges against those extremists, the perushim, even though the term 'pharisees' was used.<sup>57</sup> But as the gospel writers used the term 'Pharisees' for this group - those perushim, we may here follow the term as used in the gospels, and acknowledge also that they were referring to the specific extremists. Besides the two camps of theologians dominant at the time, there was also the group of the

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both are from the same root שָׁרָד = 'the separate ones'.  
Read J. Bowker, op.cit. pp.2f.

<sup>57</sup> ibid. pp.38ff.



Essenes. According to most scholars, it was another group of the separatists.<sup>58</sup> The Essenes did share many similarities with the other groups in Judaism. They had strict observance of the Law of Moses, like the Sadducees and Pharisees, yet of course they held unlike view points. They also had that kind of zeal for the coming of the Kingdom of God as that of the zealots.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, many scholars have identified them with the Qumran sect. Though some rejected such identification, yet there exists strong evidence for their similarities so that they at least belonged to the same sect within Judaism.<sup>60</sup> Who were the Essenes? They were the more extreme separatists who lived their lives in separate communities. At the time of Jesus, there were many communities of this kind in many of the villages and towns all around Judea; the

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58 For the study of the Essenes, read F.F. Bruce, History ch.7 The Essenes pp.77-78, ch.9. The Qumran Community pp.96-115; James L. Price, Interpreting the NT pp.72ff; S.W. Baron A Social and Religious History of the Jews Vol. II. ch.10 pp.48-54; also W.R. Farmer's article on 'the Essene' in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Vol.II pp.143-149.

59 As for zeal, they had the same kind of zeal for God. Yet they were extreme pacifist, and unlike the zealots, they were pessimistic towards the way of violence for political freedom. Hippolytus had told us that the Essenes expected a universal conflagration at the time of the last judgement. See Baron, op.cit. p.50; Bruce op.cit. p.113, 115 et.al..

60 The name 'Essenes' does not exist in the Qumran texts, yet many of the Qumran descriptions resembles that of the Essenes in Josephus and Philo's literatures. For the debate, see Bruce, op.cit. pp.77-87, 96-115, cf. Price, op.cit. pp.73-75.



Qumran sect was one of this kind. The motive for their separatist tendency was much the same as the Pharisees. They held strict rules in the observance of the Torah, learning towards extreme piety and ritualistic purity. They believed that only this kind of ascetic life would be acceptable for a really 'pious' Jew. Also it was because of their eschatological hope for the future that they believed there would be a universal conflagration at the end of the time. So they retreated from urban life, but earned their living from cattle raising and making simple crafts. They were extreme pacifists too. So they even refused to have any deals with any production of arms. They opposed war as an evil in itself, so much so that even at the time of the Roman capture in A.D. 66, they refused to take arms to fight for their survival. Thus they distinguished themselves as faithful martyrs under the Roman hands. That was why the Essense ceased to exist after A.D. 70.<sup>61</sup>

The last group we should mention under this section is the group called 'the people of the land'. They were by no means a theological or religious group, yet not without

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61 Most of them were killed in the war, only a very small portion of them survived, probably because of their assimilation with the other Jewish group. For evidences, read Josephus, Jewish War, Vol.II ch.8, as referred by W.R. Farmer in IDB, Vol.II p.146, and Baron, History pp.50f.



distinction from the other groups we have mentioned. Why used 'the people of the land'? The Hebrew word עַם הָאֲדָמָה was the term for 'the people of the land'. Originally, the word bears its secular meaning describing the vast common people in the land of Palestine (e.g. Gen.23:7etc.). Later, due to the long period of Hellenistic influence after the deportation by the Assyrians and the mixed groups of people living together in the land that the people there had inter-marriages with the other blood. Consequently, the Jews lost a bit of their tradition by absorbing the traditions of the Gentiles. Thus, their children were having very slight Jewish traditional education and were lax in keeping the Jewish law. Then after the exile and the return of the pure blood Jews in the place.<sup>62</sup> The term was then clothed with its religious connotations. And it was used as a blackname for those common mass who have lesser knowledge of the law because of their having mixed blood. Lastly the term was further developed to mean anyone who did not observe the Law, as contrary to those who devoted themselves to strict observance of the Law.<sup>63</sup> The term was frequently spoken out by the Pharisees

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62 Read Ezra 9:1-2, Neh. 10:20f etc.

63 For detailed discussion on the development of the usage of the term, see Daniel-Rops, Palestine pp.150ff.



to refer to those who were not, i.e. those non-Pharisees.<sup>64</sup>

It was because they were lax in observing the law, especially their neglect of tithing and ritual cleanliness that they were suspected by the scribes and Pharisees as unclean.<sup>65</sup> Thus,

the Talmud gave a formal definition as 'he who does not eat his bread in a state of ritual cleanliness.'<sup>66</sup> For this

simple reason the *עֲרֵאָה־נָג* were called sinners, being suspected of being religiously unclean, and they were to be separated from those religiously clean. That was why the Pharisees kept themselves strictly apart from having contact with them, especially from being a guest or inviting them as a guest for dinner, or sharing together with them at the same table.<sup>67</sup>

Who were those *עֲרֵאָה־נָג*? Indeed, in this religious sense thus said, all the people suspected in some ways of being religiously unclean, are, to be included, and sociologically they were in fact, the common mass in those days. Only those Pharisees who could manage to observe strictly the law and were

64 For this understanding, see Jeremias, Jerusalem p.259 & n. Also C.K. Barrett, NT Background: Selected Documents pp.163f.

65 See Jeremias, Jerusalem p.267, 105ff, cf. also Danby's glossary in The Mishnah, where he describes *עֲרֵאָה־נָג* as 'the name given to those Jews who were ignorant of the law and who failed to observe the rules of cleanness and uncleanness and were not scrupulous in setting apart tithes from the produce.....' See The Mishnah Appendix I. item 3 p.793.

66 See Berakoth 47b, as quoted in Rops, op.cit. p.150.

67 See Jeremias, op.cit. p.267, 105ff.



successful, could fortunately escape such labelling; all the other common people who were lax in observing the law were thus labelled. So Jeremias is indeed correct when he says that  $\text{רְשָׁאִים}$  was actually a labelling for the non-Pharisees.<sup>68</sup> Or, to say it simply, they were the common mass of the time. However, Jesus was preaching the good news specifically to this group of people.<sup>69</sup> He had been vigorously criticized by the Pharisees for the point that he had been making friends and even sharing tables with the sinners and tax-collectors, those people whom the Pharisees suspected as being unclean. Indeed, when Jesus was eating with sinner, he was obviously doing what was unbearable for the Pharisees. We will examine the reason in more details in the following chapter.

So far we have gone through the political, social and religious setting of Jesus' time, and especially the people that are of most concern for the ministry of Jesus. Thus now we may examine the gospels to study the portrayal of Jesus in the gospel and bring along his relationship with those people of his time.

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68 *ibid.* p.259 n.

69 See ch.3 for detailed discussion.

### Chapter III JESUS AND THE POOR

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Several times in the gospels we find reference to Jesus' preaching good news to the poor.<sup>1</sup> In the Beatitudes there is the saying, "Blessed are the poor"<sup>2</sup>; Luke even puts the 'preaching good news to the poor' as a core section in the ministry of Jesus. Unlike Matthew and Mark who set the beginning of Jesus' ministry in the saying: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel."<sup>3</sup>, Luke intentionally puts the reading of a passage from Isaiah as the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, though he might understand that Jesus had also started the ministry earlier.<sup>4</sup> He quotes the Book of Isaiah, saying:-

"The Spirit of Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Lk 4:18f // Is 61:1-2, 58:6)

Luke focuses the ministry of Jesus on the fulfillment of what the prophet Isaiah had been saying, i.e. the good news preached to 'the poor' 'the captives' 'the blind' 'the oppressed' and

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1 e.g. Lk 4:18, Lk 7:22 // Mt 11:5.

2 Lk 6:20 // Mt 5:3 Matthew has "poor in spirit".

3 Mt 1:15, similar words in Mt 4:17 also Lk 4:43.

4 Read Lk 4:23; cf. Mk 6:1-6 // Mt 13:54-58, who put the incident after the ministry in Galilee and Capernaum.



even 'the unacceptable'.<sup>5</sup> He certainly would not mean they were different groups of people as if saying: 'to the poor, Jesus preached good news to them; to the captive he proclaimed release; to the blind he recovered their sight; and to the oppressed he set them free.' But rather he is saying: to all of them, the good news was preached. And the different words would be taken collectively to describe one group, not separate groups. So when he says, "Good news preached to the poor", 'those captives, blind, oppressed and even the unacceptable' are included with the "poor" also.

A. Who are 'the poor'?

Our churches always like to interpret such words in their spiritual meanings, but from the study of the use of these words πτωχοὶ (poor), ἀιχμαλῶται (captive), τυφλοὶ (blind), τεθραμμένοι (oppressed) in the New Testament we may find that they strongly signify the material and physical sense, except in one or two cases where the context may explicitly denotes the other senses.<sup>6</sup> That is, unless the context clearly

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5 Mark and Matthew focus the ministry on preaching the good news of the kingdom of God (= heaven) and they lay more emphasis on the nature and message of the kingdom, whereas Luke specifically focuses on this specific group of people concerned.

6 For example, the term πτωχος as found in NT occurs more frequently in Luke than elsewhere and the fact is: almost in all cases it was referring to the materially poor. e.g. Lk 14:13,21, 16:20,22, 18:22 // Mt 19:21 // Mk 10:21,



signifies the other meaning, the words would mean in its literal sense as 'the poor' 'the captive' 'the blind' and 'the oppressed'. The same is applied to Lk 4:18f, only that the passage was quoted directly from the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament that we should study also the context as it was in the Old Testament.

Yet, the Old Testament usage of the words, on the other hand, gives a wider meaning to them. For example, the word <sup>19</sup> or <sup>19</sup> (= poor)<sup>7</sup> has been used in the Old Testament to convey a large range of meanings:

- a) In the first place, it was used to mean one who is really poor in the material sense that one does not own anything.

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Lk 19:8, 21:2 // Mk 12:42. Only in two other cases was it used in a different sense, this being clearly seen from the context. e.g. Mt 5:3 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' specifying the spiritually poor. Still here, the word <sup>19</sup> = poor in its limited sense. Only Matthew wants to expand or explicitly make clear the spiritual sense of poor adds 'in spirit'. But if it is without 'in spirit' the phrase would surely not mean the same as it does now. The second instance is in Rev.3:17, saying 'though you say you are rich, in fact you are poor' as contrasting the materially rich and the spiritually poor. In these two cases, the shifting of meaning is obvious and elsewhere reference is to the literal sense of poor.

- 7 The words <sup>19</sup> and <sup>19</sup> are equivalents as they always vary in Kethib and Qere. Generally, <sup>19</sup> = Poor, <sup>19</sup> = humble for their distinction, but the two words both bears the same range of meaning from 'poor - oppressed - humble', only for the sense of 'humble', <sup>19</sup> appears more in younger text, but <sup>19</sup> even used in older texts.



(e.g. Dt 15:11, 24f)

- b) In some cases, it may also carry the meaning of 'one being under the oppression from or in affliction from the rich and the wicked' (e.g. Gen 16:11, I Sam 1:11 etc.) Since the poor were to be under the protection of the Lord (Dt 15:11, Lev 19:10), those who are oppressed or in affliction may cry to the Lord for help and protection, and they were heard too. (e.g. Ps 82:3, 25:16, 69:29 etc.) Later, the word 'אָנִי was expanded to describe the whole people of Israel for their being in affliction especially after the exile, so that they too cried out for the Lord's deliverance. (e.g. Dt 26:7, Neh 9:9 etc.) And the Lord did promise to help. (e.g. Is 14:32, 49:13, 54:11, 66:2 etc.)
- c) Even then in some other cases, 'אָנִי has the spiritual sense to describe the remnant of the people as the humble and the meek to whom the Lord will give special care and grant victory. (e.g. Ps 37:11, 149:4, Is 66:2 etc.)

Thus the word 'אָנִי as used in the Old Testament provides quite a wider meaning, and in Is 61:1-2, 58:6 when the words 'poor, captive, blind and oppressed' were used together in this context, they provide both the physical and material sense, and the religious sense of describing the people of Israel. The physical and material sense can be seen as the basis for the other meanings. And in this whole context of Isaiah chapters 58 and 61, as it has been the promise of the Lord that He would



anoint his servant to preach good news to them and to deliver them, it is the good news for the whole people of Israel.<sup>9</sup>

Since in Luke, the passage was quoted with the mind that the ministry of Jesus was seen as the fulfillment of this Old Testament passage, then the meanings of the words as it was in the Old Testament context must not be overlooked. From the background of the usage of the words 'poor, captive, blind and oppressed', we understand that they may denote both the physical sense and the religious sense and especially in the passage which Luke quoted for Jesus' ministry, the word 'ל' did have both senses. The usage of 'ל' in the Old Testament suggests that the religious sense of the word depends heavily on its physical sense. That is, the fact that Israel was 'poor' ('ל' in its religious sense) is because it was really in the state of 'poor' and 'being oppressed' ('ל' in its physical sense)<sup>10</sup>. Yet coming back to Luke's gospel, we have to accept also that Luke does have his own specific concern. By laying emphasis on the people concerned in the kingdom of God, Luke seems having a special interest to this specific group of

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9 Read the whole context of ch.58 and 61. See J. Miulenburg's commentary in Interpreter's Bible Vol.5, esp. pp.701f.

10 Thus when we compare the OT use of 'ל' with Luke idea of πτωχος, we may find that πτωχος is a subset of 'ל' which bears a wider meaning including the religious and spiritual aspects of poor.



people, 'πτωχολ' - the physical sense of '19, the poor, the captive, the blind and the oppressed.' (Lk 4:18f). Parallel expressions can be found too, as in the Beatitudes, it says, "Blessed are the poor ..... the hungry ..... the thirsty..... and those who mourn" (Lk 6:20ff). In another instance, Jesus speaks of 'the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind' in one breath (Lk 14:13,21). And he speaks of 'the poor' several times in contrast to 'the wealthy' (e.g. Lk 16:20f, 19:8, 18:22). In all these cases the words are taken in their physical sense. The religious sense may also be included,<sup>11</sup> but nevertheless, the primary physical sense cannot be removed.<sup>12</sup> And it was basically Luke's specific concern to make clear the physical and material sense especially when he says : "Blessed are the poor" and not "Blessed are the poor in spirit."<sup>13</sup> The story of

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11 e.g. Lk 4:18f, Lk 6:20 even Lk 14:13,21 as it was in a parable setting.

12 Checking with the concordance, we are further assured that the usage of other words as τυφλός (the blind), κολλός (the maimed) and χωλός (the lame) in the gospels are all meant in their literal sense too. One exception is two cases in Matthew, Mt 15:14; 23:16ff wherein several verses the word τυφλός was used for accusing the Pharisees as blind because they have mistaken what to be more important in the Law. A parallel incident also found in John's gospel 9:39ff.

13 Jeremias's explanation as to why Luke thinks of outward expression and Matthew of inner spiritual need is : "The Matthean tradition of the beatitudes was formulated in a church which was fighting against the Pharisaic temptation to self-righteousness, the Lucan tradition in a church which



the rich man and a poor beggar Lazarus<sup>14</sup> also signifies the stress on the Lord's special care and concern for the poor. As it tells that after the poor man dies, he is carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom - to be comforted and under special care of the Lord; whereas the rich man dies and is put to suffer anguish in Hades, far away from where Abraham's bosom is (Lk 16:22f). The story has only been recorded in Luke's gospel and it signifies also Luke's special concern for those who are really poor that one day in the kingdom of God - and now the kingdom has come with the coming of Jesus - the poor will be comforted. This is the good news to the poor and in this case too, the word 'poor' has to be taken in its literal sense.

So far we can see that when the words 'poor' 'captives' 'blind' 'oppressed' are used in their Old Testament context they often denote both the physical sense and the religious sense. And as Luke has quoted the words from the context of Is 61:1-2, 58:6; plus the fact that he is having in mind Jesus' ministry as the fulfillment of what the prophet has told, the words he uses must bear both senses too in Lk 4:18f.

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was in deep distress and needed to be comforted." NT Theology p.113. If so, Luke's emphasis on physical sense becomes more obvious.

<sup>14</sup> Lk 16:20ff. The story is peculiar to Luke. The name Lazarus = God helps is a name very likely for symbolism more than a real person's name. See E.E. Ellis, Luke p.205.



But we also understand that Luke has the special concern for those who are really poor (the  $\piτωχοι$  specially in the physical and material sense) that those words used in his gospel would strongly denote their physical meanings. Yet in this paper, I shall take up the Old Testament sense of  $\piτωχοι$  and in studying Jesus' attitude to the poor, I will include 'the poor' in its different senses. To distinguish the Old Testament sense of  $\piτωχοι$  from Luke's special reference to the physical poor, I shall use the word 'poor' for the Old Testament sense and when I wish to refer to Luke's specific sense, I shall use  $\piτωχοι$ . Again as Lk 4:18f denotes, Jesus was preaching good news to  $\piτωχοι$ , captives, blind and the oppressed. This group of people as a whole we may simply call "the poor" in the Old Testament sense.<sup>15</sup> But who are these group of people in the time of Jesus? Who are within this group labelled 'the poor' in the society of Jesus? J. Jeremias when answering the question who are the poor to whom Jesus preached good news, starts from looking into the people to whom Jesus brought the good news. And from his study, he finds them to be 'the tax-collectors and sinners' 'the simple and uneducated' 'Am-ha-aretz' and 'those labor and heavy laden' - these are the people Jesus

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15  $\piτωχοι$  should be better translated in Greek as  $κατενυτοι$  as this carries a boarder sense than  $\piτωχος$ .



would call 'the poor',<sup>16</sup>. From the understanding of the meaning of 'poor' in the Old Testament time and in Jesus' days, we may also find several groups of people would too be classified under 'the poor'. For example, 'the sick', 'the blind' 'the dumb' 'the maimed' 'the lame' 'the thirsty' and 'the hungry' as found in the gospels obviously belonged to 'the Poor' - they are the common mass either physically or materially poor. That is why these words are also used together in groups (e.g. Lk 6:20ff, 7:21f // Mt 11:5, Lk 14:13,21 etc.) As the word 'poor' denotes also those who because of their being poor are oppressed and afflicted by the rich or the wicked, so they are also those 'who are oppressed' 'those who labor and are heavy laden', even 'those who mourn', 'those who weep', and 'those who hunger and thirst for righteousness'.<sup>17</sup> They are still within the Old Testament sense of 'the poor'. It fits well into Luke's account of Jesus' ministry for the poor too. Thus we find Jesus at the time preaching good news to the (Lk 4:18f, 7:22), he was at the same time healing the sick, the lame, the dumb, the maimed the lame, the blind and people of other sickness too (Lk 7:11 // Mt 11:5 et.al.)

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16 J. Jeremias, Theology pp.109ff.

17 Probably they are the oppressed who cry and wait for the help of the Lord.

and also at the same time he was calling 'those who labor and are heavy laden' to come for rest (Mt 11:28) and he preaches the Beatitudes, saying: 'Blessed are the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota$ , the hungry, the thirsty, those who mourn and those who weep' (Mt 5:3ff // Lk 6:20ff). Thus we can say they are all to be included within the group 'the poor', at least as far as the ministry of Jesus is concerned. Moreover, as we look further back into the society in Jesus' time, we find this special group of people being called  $\text{עַם הָאֶרֶץ}$ .<sup>18</sup> They were the mass of people whom the Pharisees called 'the sinners' in Jesus' days.<sup>19</sup> And they should be included as the poor too, being despised and oppressed by others. And so to sum up, we may say 'the poor' as found in the ministry of Jesus are those who are in need physically, i.e. the sick, the blind, the dumb etc.; socially, i.e. the oppressed, the laboring and heavy laden; and religiously, i.e. the people who are looked down upon by the Pharisees as the  $\text{עַם הָאֶרֶץ}$  and as sinners. These people were in the state desperately needing the help and deliverance from the Lord and it was in Jesus that good news from the Lord has now been preached specifically to them.

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18 'People of the Land' for reference, see ch.II pp.37ff.

19 Mk 2:16 // Lk 5:30, Lk 1:37,39 of Mishnah, Demai 2:2f, Hogigah 2:7, pp.21f, 214.



Then what was Jesus' mission to 'the poor'? Luke has emphasised Jesus' mission was 'to preach good news to the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota$ , to proclaim release to the captives, to recover the sight of the blind, to set at liberty those, who are oppressed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord' (Lk 4:18f). Also Jesus as portrayed in Luke's gospel was having special interests in people, especially in the social-outcast.<sup>20</sup> Thus we may start by using Luke's gospel as a basis to study the stories of those people with whom Luke was concerned much and those he thought were the people Jesus had preached the gospel to. We have said before the 'the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota$ , the captives, the blind, the oppressed' are not separate groups but were used collectively to describe one group. And when we go along the stories, we understand that the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota$  would at the same time be the captives, the blind, or the oppressed and vice versa. But for our study's sake, I may sort out the different stories in Luke's gospel and classify them into these respective segments, as the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota$ , the captives, the blind and the oppressed.

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20 Here are some of the stories peculiar to Luke: The story of a sinful woman Lk 7:36ff, the story of Zacchaeus, a chief tax-collector in Jericho Lk 19:1-10, the story of 10 Lepers, one returned and gave thanks, he was a Samaritan, Lk 17:11-19, the repentance of the robber on the cross. Lk 23:39ff. Also most parables peculiar to Luke centre much attention on people while Matthew's focus on the kingdom. See also other hints suggested by Donald Guthrie, NT Introduction p.91.



I will take the terms loosely so as to include all the people concerned in the gospel. While I am concentrating on Luke's gospel, I will consider also the different parallels and other stories found in Matthew and Mark and refer to them as I go.

#### B. The πτωχοι

The πτωχοι as we have already defined refers to those who are the materially poor. The word frequently appears in Luke's gospel to refer mostly to those people who are really poor in the material sense.<sup>21</sup> But we may still ask: why preach the good news to them? Do they deserve the good news? in any sense? or what is the good news preached to them? This may again remind us of the Old Testament idea of the Lord's special care and concern for the poor.<sup>22</sup> Though they may seem to be neglected by the society, yet the Lord does not forget them and he teaches his people to care for them. Thus the good news is the Lord's caring and concern for them. What does Jesus preach then? In the Beatitude, he says, "Blessed are you πτωχοι, for yours is the kingdom of God."<sup>23</sup> He is saying

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21 See discussion above, pp.5f.

22 e.g. Dt 15:11, Lev.19:10 etc. This idea serves as the ground for the poor later to cry for help from the Lord. See the previous section of this chapter.

23 Lk 6:20 cf. the similar version in Mt 5:3, only that Matthew focus on those who are 'poor in spirit' i.e. the spiritually



that the kingdom of God belongs to those who are πτωχοι . Surely the πτωχοι could not think of themselves in those days as having a place in God's kingdom, but Jesus preaches that they will. Also in the Parable of the Great Banquet, he teaches the 'the πτωχοι, the maimed, the blind and the lame' will be invited to sit at the feast in the kingdom of God (Lk 14:16-24). The story of the rich man and the poor beggar Lazarus (Lk 16:20ff) also vividly pictures the Lord's special care for the πτωχος, Lazarus. This reminds us of the saying in the Magnificat that, "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away." (Lk 1:53) Once when a rich young man<sup>24</sup> goes up to Jesus and asks him of eternal life, Jesus challenges him by asking him to give up his possessions. The point lies on the man's being overwhelmed by his possessions that he cannot meet with Jesus' challenge and he walks away sorrowfully. In this story, Jesus may well simply ask him to share his things with others, but rather he says, "Sell all that you have and distribute to the

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poor, and he uses an identical phrase, 'the kingdom of heaven' for 'kingdom of God'.

- 24 Matthew and Mark say it was a young man who had great possession, Mark omits the word 'young', whereas Luke says it was "an extremely" rich ruler, ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος ἐφόδρα, Luke 18:18-23 // Mk 10:17-22 // Mt 19:16-22.



πτωχοι." <sup>25</sup> He puts forth for the man 'the πτωχοι' as the object of concern. Again in the house of Zacchaeus, the chief tax-collector in Jericho, Jesus does willingly sit at table with him who being a despised tax-collector by all of the people. Such gracious act may have great impact on Zacchaeus and bring changes to him that he then says to Jesus that he would give half of his possessions to the πτωχοι . For this change, Jesus immediately declares that salvation has come to that house that day. <sup>26</sup> And here it is the giving up of his possessions or rather the caring for the πτωχοι that marks the change of Zacchaeus. In another instance, we find Jesus praising a poor widow who offers the two copper coins in the temple treasury (Lk 21:1-4 // Mk 12:41-44). Bearing in mind the πτωχοι are being neglected or even despised by many we would marvel at Jesus' special interest to them that he even praises that poor widow in the temple. He does not despise the πτωχοι , and in fact, when he preaches the good news of the

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25 Lk 18:22 // Mk 10:21 // Mt 19:21. Interestingly, it is not just co-incident that all the three gospels have kept this phrase 'to the πτωχοι '.

26 Lk 19:1-10 It would be rather inconceivable that Jesus would accept his change as the merit for salvation, thus Jeremias is right to say that it is the kindness on the part of Jesus that overcomes Zacchaeus and pushes him to confess his fault in public and promise to make good (v.8) See Jeremias Theology Vol.I p.156. The story of a sinful woman in the house of Simon plus the story of the two debtors which Jesus teaches suggests the same argument. Read Lk 7:36-52.



kingdom of God, he specifically includes them in the kingdom of God. (Lk 6:20) That is to say, the love and mercy of God through the ministry of Jesus reaches even to the *πενυχτα*. The Old Testament promises of God's care and concern for them is now in Jesus' ministry being actualized. For the messages he brings and how they are to be actualized in his ministry, we will come to that by the end of this chapter.

### C. The Captive

The second segment of the people we are looking at is 'the captive'. The word *αἰχμαλωτος* has been commonly used for those who are captives in wars.<sup>27</sup> Especially in Luke 4:18, with its Old Testament background, it refers to the people of Israel being scattered as captives among the nations. The word *αἰχμαλωτος* plus its verb *αἰχμαλωτεύω* appears only twice in the gospels, in Lk 4:18 and 21:24, and are simply describing the people of Israel who have been scattered and are now waiting for the deliverance from the Lord. So the good news to them would be the proclamation of release from their captivity and setting liberty of them from their bondage. Concerning this social and political aspect of salvation for the people of Israel, surely Jesus in his preaching of the kingdom of God, would agree that the coming of the kingdom will bring forth

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<sup>27</sup> See Arndt and Gingrich's, Lexicon, p.26.



political freedom to the people. Especially in Luke, this has been clearly expounded in the Benedictus spoken from the mouth of Zechariah.<sup>28</sup> He says: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ..... that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us..... to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." (Lk 1:68,71,74f) So the coming of the kingdom as shown here brings in part the political deliverance to the people. Though the political deliverance is only a part, for the ultimate purpose leads to the deliverance of the people into the proper relationship with God; yet this part is not unreal and is to be included in God's whole plan of Salvation for the people.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the idea of political

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28 Lk 1:68-79 The story is peculiarly found in Luke as preparing for the whole ministry of Jesus. The prophecy in the Benedictus, as Ellis comments, extols God for his messianic deliverance and rejoices in its results. The deliverance is thus seen in part in terms of political deliverance. See E.E. Ellis, Luke p.74f.

29 Geldenhuys in his Commentary on the Gospel of Luke takes the verses exclusively in its spiritual sense (p.94). He uses the latter part of the Benedictus which speaks of spiritual Salvation to evade the preceding part which describes the salvation in earthly political terms. This indeed is unfair to the Benedictus as a whole. Rather the political and the spiritual senses of salvation should be taken together as a whole as the Benedictus presents.



deliverance in Jesus' mind was not the same as the prevailing ideas in his time. As we have seen from the social background of his time, we understand there exists a highly intense revolutionary sentiment in the mind of the people against the Roman rule. This can be especially seen in the attempts of the Zealotic movements to oust the enemy. The other quarters have their different attitudes towards the Roman rule: the authorities and the chief priests might collaborate with the Roman rulers; the Essenes in their far away desert might remain aloof from political issues; but the Zealots did insist on violence to get rid of the foreign rule. Against these different views, Jesus presents his own views. The authorities were afraid of anything that would excite the revolutionary sentiments of the people, but Jesus openly preaches about the coming of the kingdom of God. The Essene talked of the kingdom of God in its tenuous and spiritualized way but Jesus expounds it in earthly and human terms. Yet Jesus does not go to the extreme as the Zealots. The political struggle will not bring forth the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of God will in turn bring forth political freedom. Also

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Caird has rightly said: "Israel must attain independence from pagan rule in order to render to God a pure worship, free from pagan defilement." (p.58) The former is taken as a step to the latter deliverance.



the kingdom he brings is a kingdom of peace, not by violence nor by force. This can be shown in the scene of his glorious entry into Jerusalem.<sup>30</sup> At Passover time, as it is a time for the Jews paying homage to Jerusalem, the felling of patriotic enthusiasm is always at the highest and people then in Jerusalem are highly susceptible to any nationalistic excitement. As Jesus at that time is intending a demonstration in Jerusalem,<sup>31</sup> he would easily excite the people's revolutionary fervour. Yet it is not what happened in his entry, rather he has chosen to ride on an ass, humbly entering the city.<sup>32</sup> He is allaying the fervour at that time. By symbolically riding on an ass,<sup>33</sup> he is telling the people that He would be their Messiah, if only they would choose the way of peace rather than their way of violence.<sup>34</sup> That is the way to the kingdom of God. While the people and

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30 Mt 21:7-11 // Mk 11:7-10 // Lk 19:35-38. We will go into the details in ch.4.

31 See Caird, Luke p.216. Also the argument for the historicity in Cranfield's Mark p.349.

32 Mt 21:7 // Mk 11:7 // Lk 19:35. See also note in ch.4.

33 It was taken as a fulfillment of Zech 9:9, thus symbolizing the Messianic entrance into the Holy city.

34 See Bruce, History p.180. Also Caird, St. Luke p.216 saying, "Probably he (Jesus) had in mind the prophecy, Zech 9:9f, that one day a king would come to Zion, riding on a donkey to show that his authority rests not on military force but on his ability to establish a reign of universal peace" - i.e. by the way of Love.



their nationalists were filled in their minds with force and violence, Jesus thought of it in peaceful means, as demonstrated by his riding on an ass in lowliness and in meekness. Some sayings may seem to contradict with this idea. (e.g. Lk 12:51 // Mt 10:34, Lk 22:36 etc.) Especially, in Lk 22:36, he has mentioned to his disciples in the last supper that "But now ..... let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one." Does he really mean that "now" we should do violence, with swords? Certainly not. As many commentators have suggested, the saying here should be taken figuratively rather than literally.<sup>35</sup> We can also detect the meaning from the context Luke has given.<sup>36</sup> Luke tells us that the disciples have so responded to him, saying. "Lord, Lord, here are two swords" (v.38a). But they would have probably mistaken Jesus words, for this followed with Jesus' comment: "It is enough."<sup>37</sup> That is, he stopped them by saying "Enough, Enough"<sup>38</sup>. Again, when the disciple were trying to use swords, Jesus forbade

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35 e.g. See Geldenhuys, Luke pp.571f, E.E. Ellis, Luke p.256. Caird, St. Luke p.241. et.al..

36 Lk 22:35-38, esp.vv. 35f, 38 which are peculiar to Luke alone.

37 v.38b the saying is not an affirmative answer as 'OK' or 'Alright'. But rather it is used as 'a sad dismissal of the subject' cf. Mk 14:41. See Caird op.cit. p.241, also Geldenhuys' discussion, op.cit. pp.571f.

38 Reiu's translation, cf. also Bruce's translation: 'Enough of this', History p.184.



them, saying, "No more of this" (v.51). Thus, it shows that the disciples have mistaken the saying in Lk 22:36 and that Jesus did not really mean to urge them to use force. Rather, when he was arrested, he did not resist. It fits in well with his teaching: "Do not resist one who is evil." (Mt 5:39) The way of Jesus is the way of peace not the way of violence. And the political deliverance comes not with swords or by force, but comes forth through the coming of the kingdom of God.<sup>39</sup> So far as we have seen, Jesus does not refute any political deliverance of the people of Israel. Only that he does not agree with the prevailing views of his contemporaries, esp. those of the Zealots. Rather he sees the political deliverance not as a decisive part, but only a part of the total deliverance. It is what we have seen from the Benedictus that political deliverance is a part of God's plan for His people. The political deliverance will come as the result of the coming of the kingdom of God. That is why we see in the ministry of Jesus, that he emphasizes much more on the preaching of the kingdom of God. The political deliverance does not bring forth the kingdom of God, but the kingdom

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39 For further discussion, see also F.F. Bruce. op.cit. ch.14. 'Jesus and the kingdoms of the world' pp.170-185. It is indeed a good summary of Jesus' view on the political situation of his time.



of God will bring forth the political deliverance as well. At least Jesus as we seen from the gospels is more concerned with the kingdom of God than mere political deliverance. Moreover, much of the gospel materials tells of deliverance not from the foreign power, but from the power of Satan. Thus the emphasis of deliverance out of the power of enemies has shifted to the deliverance out of the power of Satan. So it is not the kingdom of Israel as against its enemies, but it is the coming of the kingdom of God as against the kingdom of Satan. It is not that the former is unreal, but rather it is the latter that one is more to be concerned for. Thus under this section on 'the release of the captive', we may include also 'the release of bondage from the power of Satan', that is, those who are in the bondage of the power of demons. Jesus has once said of a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for 18 years that she was taken captive by Satan and needed to be released from the bond. (Lk 13:11-17 esp. v.16) The coming of Jesus is to set free those who are bound. In Luke, there are five typical stories about Jesus' casting out of demons.<sup>40</sup> In each case, the coming of Jesus

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40 Lk 4:33-37 // Mk 1:23-28, Lk 8:26-39 // Mk 5:1-20 // Mt 8:28-34, Lk 9:37-43a // Mk 9:14-29 // Mt 17:14-21, Lk 11:14-23 // Mk 3:22-27 // Mt 12:22-30 and Lk 13:10-16 which is peculiar to Luke. Moreover there is one other story which is omitted in Luke, the story of a Gentile woman asking Jesus to heal her daughter who has been possessed by an unclean spirit Mk 7:24-30 // Mt 15:21-28.



is seen as bringing destruction of the power of demons (e.g. Lk 4:33-37 esp. v.34 and // s), or as saving the person from the power of Satan (e.g. Lk 13:11-17 esp. v.16). Even Jesus himself sees the casting of demon as fighting against Satan. Once when he has sent the seventy<sup>41</sup> out to preach the gospel of the kingdom, he gives them power to heal. When the seventy return saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.' (Lk 10:17) Jesus exclaims, 'I saw Satan falling like lighting from heaven.' (v.18) Thus the power of healing and casting out demons is seen as the victory over the power of Satan and the destruction of Satan's power. It should be noted also that Jesus follows the contemporary view of explaining sickness as the works of demons and of Satans.<sup>42</sup> The stooping woman has been thought of having a spirit of infirmity for 18 years and Jesus in healing her describes it as releasing her from the bond of Satan (Lk 13:11-17 esp. v.11, 16). An epileptic boy was also thought of as being possessed

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41 Read Lk 10:1,17. Some other MSS has 'seventy two' e.g. Vaticanus and Bezae Codexes et.al. Both have almost the same weight of evidences and scholars remain indecisive for either variant. See also the fuller discussion in B.M. Metzger, The Text of the NT, pp.243ff.

42 Of course, it cannot be applied to all kinds of sickness. For example, those sicknesses also mentioned under the heading of 'the blind' in the next section.



by a spirit.<sup>43</sup> It was only after Jesus has rebuked the spirit out of the boy that the boy is then healed (Lk 9:42 // Mt 17:18). The one thing Jesus does differ from the contemporary view is: while the contemporary view attributes sickness to the work of Satan, Jesus overcomes it and attributes the healing as from the power of God and as a manifestation of the coming of the kingdom. He has once said, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."<sup>44</sup> Thus we can see the casting out of demons by Jesus has shown the destruction of Satan's power, and the release of the 'captives' from the bond's of Satan, as the manifestation of the coming of the kingdom of God.

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43 Lk 9:39, cf. Mk 9:17 possessed by a dumb spirit, v.25 "You dumb and deaf spirit". Also Mt 17:15 says simply 'the boy was an epileptic' yet Mt. then says, 'Jesus rebuked the demon out of him.' (v.18). The word epileptic = *ελεγκνίζου* was derived from *ελεγήν* = moon, hence the verb literally means 'moon-struck', the modern term for it is 'lunatic'. See Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon* p.754a. Thus here we can see the combining idea of the sickness and the demoniac power behind the sickness, clothed in the usage of words even today.

44 Lk 11:20 cf. Mt 12:28 he uses 'by the spirit of God'. Jeremias in his study on the miracle stories of the gospel has also the remark: "We can also find accounts of the expulsion of demons, healing, raising of the dead, stilling of storm..... etc. in contemporary literature..... The point being that these things happened frequently in those days and the early Church only shared it with its times. They were common..... (Yet) The one thing different was Jesus' pointing these happenings to the acts of God, as the manifestation of the kingdom of God." See Jeremias *Theology* Vol.I pp.86f.



#### D. The Blind

The third segment of the group we come to is 'the blind'. Blindness was taken as the predominant example of sickness of the time (Lk 4:18, 7:22); Lk 7:22 has indeed given a list of the main healings Jesus did in his times, that 'the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the leper are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.....' So under this heading of 'the blind', we shall go through also the various miraculous healings of the Lord Jesus. Not many miracle stories about the blind are recorded in the three gospels, but in various instances, we find the reference to Jesus' healing of a great multitude including the blind (e.g. Lk 7:21, Mt 9:28, 12:22, 15:30f, 21:14). In Luke, there is only one instance telling Jesus' healing a blind man was begging on the road near Jericho.<sup>45</sup> Mark has the name for

the blind man,

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<sup>45</sup> Lk 18:35-43 cf Mk 10:46-52//Mt 20:29-34, Luke says it happened when Jesus was drawing near to Jericho, whereas Mark and Matthew say it was when Jesus was leaving Jericho. Two possible solutions have been suggested to harmonize the different accounts. The simpler one is that there were two Jerichos in the time of Jesus: the Old Jericho at the site of the Canaanite city and the New one, the recently built Herodian city. So, while Mark and Matthew are saying that Jesus was leaving the Old Jericho, Luke is saying that he is drawing near the New one. Another solution is to adjust the Lucan account by Marcan and Matthean account, i.e., the healing of the blind man should be after the incident with Zacchæus which takes place in Jericho (Lk 19:1-10). But, in any case, as N. Geldenhuys has rightly commented,



the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus,<sup>46</sup> while Matthew changes the number to two.<sup>47</sup> Matthew has another story of the two blind men healed while Jesus was in Galilee.<sup>48</sup> And Mark also has another one peculiar to himself, the story of a blind man at Bethsaida (Mk 8:22-26). The various stories together point to Jesus' power and his compassion to heal, notably the saying - 'Have mercy on me (us)' in each instance, and in one or two instances, we have the saying - 'Jesus pitied and touched their eyes' (Mt 20:34, also 9:29, Mk 8:23,25). Together with the other miracle stories, they are recalled to testify

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"The chronological order of the incidents is unimportant here and is not stressed any in the (Lucan) narrative." See Luke pp.467f.

46 Mk 10:46. It is seldom in the miracle stories that the name of the person was retained and this may account for the omission in Matthew and Luke. Another story with the person's name retained was the story of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, Mk5:22 for which Luke keeps it but Matthew omits, Lk 8:40-56// Mt 9:18-26.

47 It has been explained that the story of the blind men was corresponding to the blindness of the two disciples, the sons of Zebedee, who failed to understand Jesus' teaching of the passion, so following with the story of the blindness of these two disciples, Matthew put forth the story of two blind men who asked for their sight. Thus the two blind men correspond to the two disciples. See Fenton, St. Matthew p.326.

48 Mt 9:27-31. The story was peculiar to Matthew, but the form resembles the story in Mt.20:29-34 and //s. The reason for this story here may be the setting Matthew want to pave for the coming answer of Jesus in Mt 11:5. This will be discussed later.



the coming of the Messiah and the time of salvation.<sup>49</sup> Besides the blind, are also the lame, the leper, the deaf and the dead. For the lame and the leper, we can find several times they were referred to especially with specific reference to the kingdom of God,<sup>50</sup> yet for detailed stories there has been only one for each, these being the most typical stories: the healing of ten lepers (Lk 17:11-19) and the healing of a paralytic (Lk 5:17-26 // Mt 9:1-8 // Mk 2:1-12). The story of the healing of a leper is almost identically reserved in the three gospels.<sup>51</sup> Though they are put in slightly different setting in each gospel, yet the story is the same to show the power of Jesus to deal with leprosy. Leprosy is a term in the Bible used for a variety of skin diseases, but whatever the precise nature it is, a leper was an outcast. The Law could do nothing for the leper, it could only protect the rest of the people against it.<sup>52</sup> But the cleansing of a leper was to be seen as one of the signs for the coming of the Messiah. (e.g. Lk 7:22//Mt 11:5)

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49 Mt 11:5, Lk 7:22, 4:18. See pages following.

50 e.g. Mt 11:5 // Lk 7:22, Lk 14:13,21, Mt 10:8 etc.

51 Only Matthew and Luke have omitted the phrase, 'Moved with Compassion' Mk 1:41, for there is also another possible variant = 'moved with anger'. Probably the meaning was unclear or the phrase unfit for the story so that Matthew and Luke dropped it together. See also Beare, The Earliest Records of Jesus p.72 for discussion.

52 e.g. Lev. 13:45ff. See also Lightfoot, The Gospel Message of St. Mark p.26 and Nineham, St. Mark p.86.



The story of the healing of a paralytic has a special point in it too. It is clothed with Jesus saying: "But that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins."<sup>53</sup> The story was in fact kept in such a way to introduce this saying of Jesus as the answer to the question about his authority to forgive sin.<sup>54</sup> Yet the importance of the healing of a paralytic to walk is still significant. It too has the significance as pointing to the coming of kingdom of God. Before we come to this point of the significance, we may go through the other stories of healings too. Several stories are mentioned about the dumb or deaf<sup>55</sup> but in each case, the being dumb or deaf is attributed to the working of demons.<sup>56</sup> It is by Jesus' rebuking the demons out of the

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53 Lk 5:24//s, it is an amazing thought that the three records vary much yet one thing is common, the statement quoted is identical in all the three records.

54 Here we can see the characteristic of the Matthean record that while Mark gives some descriptions on how the friends were helping the paralytic to overcome difficulties so as to come to Jesus, Matthew, for the sake of conciseness, shifts the emphasis directly on the questioning of the scribes about Jesus' authority to forgive sin cf. Mk 2:1-12 // Mt 9:1-8, later Matthew even applies the authority of Jesus and points to the Church as having the same authority especially v.8 "God had given such authority to men", confirming the later Church's practices.

55 The Greek word κωφοὶ can mean both deaf and dumb or either, the difference is to be detected from the context.

56 e.g. Lk 11:14, a dumb demon//Mt 12:22, a blind and dumb demoniac, also Mk 9:25, a boy was possessed by a dumb spirit Mt 9:32f and Mk 7:32 etc.



person, that the cure was effected and the person could speak or hear.<sup>57</sup> Other sicknesses besides the blind, the lame, the leper and the deaf are: the healing of Simon's mother-in-law (Lk 4:38-39 // Mk 1:19-31 // Mt 8:14f), the healing of a man with a withered hand (Lk 6:6-11 // Mk 3:1-6 // Mt 12:9-14), the healing of a man with dropsy (Lk 14:1-6 peculiar to Luke), the healing of a centurion's servant (Lk 7:1-10 // Mt 8:5-13) and the healing of the woman with hemorrhage (Lk 8:43-48 // Mk 5:25-34 // Mt 9:20-22). Besides the healing miracles, we should mention also the miracles of raising the dead. There are two stories of Jesus' raising the dead and they are included in Luke's gospel.<sup>58</sup> The two stories are the raising of the widow's son at Nain<sup>59</sup> and the raising of Jairus' daughter.<sup>60</sup> Especially in the story of the widow's son,<sup>61</sup> it was by the words of Jesus, saying, "Young man, I say to you

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57 e.g. Mt 9:32f, 12:22, Mk 7:32ff,37, Mk 9:17-25, Lk 11:14 etc.

58 The famous miracle of raising of Lazarus is in St. John's gospel so is not included here.

59 Lk 7:11-17, peculiar to Luke.

60 Lk 8:40-56 // Mk 5:21-43 // Mt 9:18-26. Matthew was without the name 'Jairus'. Also while Mark and Luke has the father asking Jesus to heal his daughter who was going to die, Matthew has the father asking for the restoration of her life for she was already dead; despite the existing differences, the whole form and content still suggest that they were referring to the same incident.

61 Lk 7:12, has "her only son".



arise" that the dead man sat up immediately and began to speak. He is actually doing what had been done by the prophets Elijah and Elisha<sup>62</sup>. So that the people would cry out before him, "A great prophet has arisen among us." Even more than that is the exclamation followed: "God has visited his people." (v.16) Luke has portrayed here the picture of Jesus as it was in the climax of his ministry that the people recognised him as God-coming-to-us. Actually Luke has introduced this story at this point to prepare the answer of Jesus to John's question of whether Jesus was the Messiah. (Lk 7:19ff esp. v.22) Jesus' answer was: "Go and tell John.....: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead raised up and the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota$  have good news preached to them."<sup>63</sup> Here we may inquire into the meaning behind Jesus' answer. John's question was to ask whether Jesus was the one who is to come, i.e. their long-awaited Messiah. And Jesus' answer was pointing to him such things as the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers

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62 cf. I Kg 17:17-24, II Kg 4:18-37 Because of great similarity found to the LXX text the form critics suggest it may be Luke's deliberate construction from the Hellenistic wonder-tale and the LXX phrases. See Beare, *op.cit.* p.99. Nevertheless, Luke sets the story here to point out the fact that Jesus was even greater than the prophet, cf. "God has visited his people" v.16 and to the answer to John's question that followed.

63 Lk 7:22 especially 'the dead raised up' specifically referring to the preceding incidence.



are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead raised up and the have good news preached to them. This saying reminds us of the Old Testament parallels about the coming of the Messiah, especially Isaiah's description of the signs for the coming, here quoting some of the passages:-

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then shall the lame man leap like a hart,  
and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy." (Is 35:5f)

"In that day the deaf shall hear the words of a  
book, and out of their gloom and darkness the  
eyes of the blind shall see.

The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord  
and the poor among men shall exult in the  
Holy One of Israel" (Is 29:18f)

These are thought to be what will happen when the Messiah comes to save the people. Such are the images: the blind shall see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dumb speak and the poor shall exult..... That is why when Jesus is asked whether he is the Messiah, he points then to this fact that - the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear and even the dead raised up, and the  $\pi\epsilon\omega\chi\omicron\iota$  have good news preached to them. These things have a deeper significance than what just happened, as they are all signs for the coming of the kingdom of God,



for the time of salvation.<sup>64</sup> Thus we can see now that all those miraculous healing stories do have this significance of pointing to the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. We have seen how Luke deliberately put the story of raising of the widow's son just before John's question and he adds the saying too that truly "God has visited his people" (Lk 7:22) And if we turn into the gospel of Matthew, we find more or less the same plan set before the question raised by John. Matthew begins the ministry of Jesus with the Sermon on the Mount (Ch. 5-7) then is the healing ministry from Ch. 8-9. What did Jesus do in this ministry as Matthew recorded? We can list them as below -

- Mt 8:1-4     A leper cleansed
- 8:5-13     The Centurion's servant healed
- 8:14-17     Simon's mother-in-law healed#
- 8:28-34     Two demons cast out
- 9:1-8       A lame (paralytic) walk
- 9:18-26     The dead raised  
              (the daughter of a ruler of the  
              synagogue)
- 9:27-31     Two blind men receive their sight
- 9:32-33     A dumb speak

# Especially in 8:17, Matthew adds concerning the healings of Jesus: That was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah (53:4), "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases." It should be noted that quotation here renders the direct physical and literal meaning from the Hebrew text and stands

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64 cf. Jeremias, Theology pp.103ff.



in contrast to the LXX spiritualizing interpretation.<sup>65</sup> As in Is 53:4, the prophet has in mind the suffering of the servant which is due to sin, yet not of his own, but is bearing the consequences of the sins of others.<sup>66</sup> LXX and Targum have simply spiritualized the text as saying: 'He bears our sins.'<sup>67</sup> But Matthew retains the original meaning of the Hebrew Text and tells rightly of the healing ministry of Jesus as a fulfillment of this text. Thus he is portraying Jesus as a suffering servant, who takes our infirmities and bore our diseases.<sup>68</sup>

Mt 10 then recalls the sending of the disciples to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand and they are given power and authority to 'Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons.' (vv.7f) Then in Chapter 11

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65 The Matthean word *ἀσθενείας* = infirmities (RSV) render far better the sense of *כִּלְיָהוּ* in Is 53:4 than *ἁμαρτίας* used in LXX. Indeed, LXX has been spiritualizing the text. Yet in the Matthean quotation here, it is strange that Matthew adopts the original physical sense. cf. also Gundry, The Use of OT in St. Matthew's Gospel pp.109f, 230f.

66 For the understanding of the text and the association of suffering in relation to the sins of men, see also James Muilenburg's commentary on Is 53:4 in Interpreter's Bible Vol.5, pp.621f.

67 LXX : οὗτος τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει . See also the comments in Gundry, op.cit. pp.109f, 230f.

68 Also the Hebrew word *כָּאֵו* means simply pains and sufferings, and Is 53:4 is saying: He carries our pains. LXX though spiritualizes the text *καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν ὁδυνᾶται* , the word *ὁδυνᾶται* does have a closer meaning for *כָּאֵו*. See Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon p.557. Yet Matthew has deliberately put *τὰς νόσους* as parallel to *כָּאֵו* , with reasons clearly seen.



comes the question raised by John: "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (v.3) To this, Jesus' answer was: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the πτωχοι have good news preached to them." (v.5) Thus Matthew introduces the ministry of Jesus also in a way to prepare the answer for John's question. And it makes clearer that the miracles recalled in the gospels do point to the coming of the kingdom of God and that was the good news to everyone.

#### E. The Oppressed

As Luke has said of Jesus' ministry that it is 'to preach good news to the πτωχοι, to proclaim release to the captives, to recover sight of the blind, to set at liberty to the oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' So the final segment of this group of people we come to is 'the oppressed.' The word τεθρονημένος was derived from θρῶν which has the original meaning of 'breaking in pieces' but when applied to persons it bears the meaning of 'being lowered, down-trodden and oppressed'.<sup>69</sup> The word appears only once in New Testament, in this incidence in

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69 See Arndt and Gingrich, op.cit. p.363.

Lk 4:18 which is in fact quoted as parallel from Is 58:6.

So we may turn to the Old Testament too for its meaning. The Hebrew equivalent is  $\text{שָׁדַד}$ , a Qal participle of  $\text{שָׁדַד}$  which has the basic meaning of 'breaking into pieces',<sup>70</sup> and when applied to people, it also bears the meaning of 'ill-treating others',<sup>71</sup> or 'oppressing others'.<sup>72</sup> In Is 58:6, it is expressing the desire of the Lord to let the oppressed go free as contrasting with the people's practices of oppressing their workers.<sup>73</sup> Thus, it gives a picture of a people who are being ill-treated, oppressed and down-trodden by others, yet the Lord wants to set them free.

In Lk 4:18 the words  $\alpha\piο\sigma\epsilon\iota\lambda\epsilon\iota \epsilon\nu \alpha\phi\epsilon\epsilon\iota$  come together with  $\tau\epsilon\theta\rho\alpha\sigma\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  meaning 'setting them free'. The word  $\alpha\phi\epsilon\epsilon\iota$ , from  $\alpha\phi\acute{\iota}\eta\mu\iota$ , has been used just two lines above with  $\alpha\iota\chi\mu\alpha\lambda\acute{\omega}\tau\omicron\varsigma$  in v.18 as releasing the captives and here

70 e.g. II Kg 23:12.

71 e.g. in I Sam 12:3f, used together with  $\text{פָּשַׁע}$  = defrauding.

72 e.g. Amos 4:1  $\text{שָׁדַד לְפִי וְשָׁדַד לְפִי}$  used together with  $\text{שָׁדַד לְפִי}$  = 'oppressing the poor and crushing the needy' (RSV)

73 cf. v.3  $\text{שָׁדַדְתָּ כָּל עַמְּךָ}$  = 'You pressed hard all your workers'.



with *τεθραγκμένους* as setting the oppressed free. Actually they are similar expressions. *ἀφέναι* carries also the idea of forgiving a person, pardoning his guilt and letting him go.<sup>74</sup> So it is one part of Jesus' mission to the oppressed that he pardons their sins and let them go. The phrase, *ἀφέναι ἁμαρτιῶν* = forgiveness of sins, so frequently appears that it becomes one of the core message of the gospel and in the ministry of Jesus, several times he has said such words: 'Your sins are forgiven' (e.g. Lk 5:20 // Mk 2:5 // Mt 9:2, Lk 7:48). So here under the heading of 'the Oppressed', we may study also Jesus' mission to the sinners, especially his preaching forgiveness of sins to the sinners. In his ministry, Jesus has been accused of being a friend of sinners (Lk 7:34 // Mt 11:19), for he has openly sat at table with them. (Lk 5:29 // Mk 2:15 // Mt 9:10) Moreover, he declared their sins to be forgiven. In the healing of a paralytic<sup>75</sup>

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74 See Arndt and Gingrich, op.cit p.125. The word frequently appears in New Testament with *ἁμαρτιῶν* = forgiveness of sins. e.g. Lk 1:77, 3:3, Mk 1:4, Mt 26:28, Lk 24:47 and also in much of Pauline epistles.

75 Lk 5:17-26 // Mk 2:1-12 // Mt 9:1-8 The stories vary much in the three gospels due to their different emphasis and concerns. Mark's story seems stressing two points: a) the actual story of how the friends helping the paralytic to overcome difficulties to reach Jesus, and b) the proof for Jesus' having authority to forgive sins. But Matthew abbreviates the story a bit for the sake of conciseness and he may think that point b) should be more emphasized.



the story is leading to the question of Jesus' authority to forgive sin. For Jesus has said to the paralytic: 'Man, your sins are forgiven.' (Lk 5:20 // Mk 2:5 // Mt 9:2) And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question that Jesus was speaking blasphemies.<sup>76</sup> Then Jesus says, "But that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins....." And he healed the paralytic in their midst to prove that he does have the power to do so. (Lk 5:24 // Mk 2:10 // Mt 9:6) The healing itself was a sign of the forgiveness of the sins. Another story tells of a sinful woman anointing Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:36-52). In the midst, Jesus also says openly to the

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He even goes further to point to the authority of the early Church to forgive sins for he not only affirm Jesus' authority, but adds, "God had given such authority to men." (Mt 9:8) Luke on the other hand, changes not much of Mark's story, but adjusts a bit for the sake of his readers. e.g. he has 'Teacher of the Law' for the explanation of the scribes = Legal experts for his Gentile readers (Lk 5:21) and he explains also that they were from the villages of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. Thus gives a clear setting of some significant religious leaders watching the incidence. Also while Mark has a Palestinian type of housing with turf roof which can be removed, Luke introduces 'tiles of roof' which significantly is not a Palestinian type. May be Luke was having in mind his Roman readers who are familiar with houses of the Greek type..... Yet despite of the various differences existing in the three gospels the affirmation of Jesus' authority to forgive sin is clearly shown from all stories.

76 Lk 5:21 cf. Mk 2:6 // Mt 9:3, they say 'some of the scribes' and also 'they were questioning in their hearts' not speaking out as Luke recalls.



woman, "Your sins are forgiven" (v.48). It takes for granted that Jesus had this authority to forgive sins. He was teaching us to pray in the Lord's prayer that: "Our father who are in heaven..... forgive us our sins....."<sup>77</sup> And certainly his proclamation that their sins are forgiven was the good news to those sinners when they are praying to the heavenly father for forgiveness. In his teachings, the forgiveness of sins is also a predominant feature within the gospel message. He uses pictorial languages to describe God's forgiveness as remission of our debts.<sup>78</sup> The famous parable of the Prodigal son, together with the parallel of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin (Lk 15:1ff) are vivid pictures showing the great compassion of God in accepting sinners. He is like the shepherd who has lost one sheep, who leaves the ninety-nine in the wilderness and seeks the lost sheep until he finds it. And when he finds it, he rejoices with his friends. He is also like a woman who loses one coin, who lights the lamp and

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77 Lk 11:4 cf. Mt 6:12 "forgive us our debts" The difference is accountable for the Aramaic word for sin, *hōbā*, which does mean 'debt' at the same time. Jeremias suggests that Matthew's *τὰ ἀρετήματα* is a literal translation and Luke's *τὰς ὑμετέρας* is a replacement by the colloquial Greek. See Jeremias, *Theology* Vol.I p.196. Thus we can see in the use of Aramaic word that Jesus may have 'the remission of debts' and 'forgiveness of sins' as parallel expression of the same meaning.

78 e.g. Lk 7:41-43, Mt 18:23-25, see the preceeding note also.



sweeps the house, seeking diligently until she finds it. And when she finds it, she rejoices also with her friends and neighbors. Jesus adds, "Even so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents." (Lk 15:7, 10) He talks of the lovingkindness of God to seek for sinners and wait for their repentance. So, in the parable of the prodigal son, he pictures God as a loving father who accepts the prodigal son and forgives all his past deeds, who even calls for friends to rejoice for the returning of the son, saying, "for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Lk 15:24,32) This teaching of Jesus was extremely challenging to the Pharisees and the Scribes of his time, for the latter only have this idea of the love of God in their conceptual mind but never put it into their real situations of life as Jesus did. The three parables in Luke were actually Jesus' attack on their contemporary view.<sup>79</sup>

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79 The setting in Lk 15 was the accusation of Pharisees and scribes on Jesus' receiving sinners and eating with them. Thus we find Jesus not only portraying the lovingkindness of God to sinners but also contrasting it with the attitude of the Pharisees towards them. The picture of the elder son in the third parable was exactly the picture of the Pharisees. That he was angry at the father's treating of the younger son resembles very much the Pharisee's hostility towards Jesus' acceptance of the sinners. Yet, Jesus said in the words of the father: "It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this younger brother was dead, and is alive; he was not, and is found." (v.32)



It was for the reason that Jesus did seriously bring into practice the lovingkindness of the Lord by befriending sinners and even eating with them frequently. The Pharisees and the Scribes could not stand such behavior of Jesus that they murmured at him. Thus, Jesus told the three parables to answer their question: "Why did he eat with sinners?" (Lk 15:2f)

In fact, eating with sinners is an act not simply showing friendship to them, but also by itself bears a religious connotation that to a Jew, sharing the same table means sharing life and fellowship together in the presence of God.<sup>80</sup> The Pharisees and Scribes could not have any kind of fellowship or contact with sinners, for according to the Scribal interpretation of the Mosaic Law, the Lord demands unconditional obedience to his commandments, including the tithing and ritual cleanliness.<sup>81</sup> And to them, the sinners were those who do not pay attention to the commandments of the Lord, especially on tithing and ritual cleanliness. So eating with them together may entail the consumption of their food on

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80 Jeremias has so remarked: "In Judaism in particular, table fellowship means fellowship before God, for the eating of a piece of broken bread by everyone who shares in the meal brings out the fact that they all have a share in the blessing which the master of the house had spoken over the unbroken bread." See Theology Vol.I pp.115f.

81 See chapter 2, section C, under the group עַמְּךָ הַזֶּה . Also Jeremias, Jerusalem, pp.266f.



which tithes have not yet been paid. So it would certainly lead to one's own defilement through table-fellowship with them. Moreover such association may also lead one to adopt their manner of life too.<sup>82</sup> Thus the Pharisees and Scribes have set for themselves strict rules to separate themselves from being a guest or inviting a sinner as guest for table-fellowship. They valued very much of their religious cleanliness as applied even to their practical life. Yet Jesus was doing what was strictly forbidden by their rules and traditions, for he was having table fellowship with sinners.<sup>83</sup> It was indeed an extreme radical action of his time. The Pharisees and the scribes could not bear such kind of action. And when he was asked why he ate with sinners, he replied with a proverb: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I come not to call the righteous, but the sinners."<sup>84</sup> Jesus here pictures himself as a doctor or

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82 See also Nineham's St. Mark pp.95ff.

83 e.g. Lk 5:29 // Mk 2:15 // Mt 9:10, Mark and Matthew do not make clear whether Jesus was invited as a guest or he himself was the host inviting sinners into his house, but Luke says that it was in Levi's House. Yet Fenton in his commentary on St. Matthew suggests that Matthew may intend to think of Jesus as the host, cf. Mt 9:10,13. See St. Matthew p.138. Yet anyway, either of the actions was strictly forbidden and Jesus as a Rabbi has broken it openly.

84 Mk 2:17 cf. Mt 9:12f, Lk 5:31f. It is often argued whether Jesus did acknowledge the Pharisees as righteous or not as



a physician and the sinners as his patients. He argue that it is wrong for the doctor to keep himself away from his patients, but rather it is his job to bring health to them. Thus he said, "I come not to call the righteous, but sinners." and his mission was to call sinners to repentance (Lk 5:32). The significance of having table fellowship does have a even deeper meaning. Besides the religious connotation of having fellowship together before God, there was also an expectation of an eschatological feast at the time when the Messiah comes that the people of God are gathered together to sit around the table. It was the Messianic Banquet for the people of God. And Jesus' having table fellowship with sinners did have the connotation of symbolizing the Messianic Banquet. For Jesus, on the one hand behaving himself as 'the Messiah to come' and at the same time sharing table-fellowship with sinners, thus declaring his accepting them into 'the people

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he was separating the sinners from the righteous. e.g. Geldenhuys Luke p.193; cf. David Hill's Matthew p.175. Hill admits the acknowledgement. Yet anyway, Jesus is here dealing not with the separation, but rather he is to justify his own association with the sinners, he goes on to say: 'I come for the sinners.' Matthew adds also in the middle a saying from Hosea, thus "Go and learn what this means. 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice'" Mt 9:13a. The quotation justifies the action of Jesus that he was in accordance to the prophetic understanding of the will of God.



of God' for the banquet.<sup>85</sup> Such was a very radical demonstration of the message of the kingdom of God. It actualizes the openness and graciousness of the Lord in including sinners into His kingdom. As the power of healing was a sign to the forgiveness of sins, table-fellowship too was a visible sign of the invisible grace of God to sinners.

Alongside the group of sinners, we can find another group frequently mentioned in the gospels. It is the group of tax-collectors.<sup>86</sup> For instance, Jesus has been criticized as being a friend of both tax-collectors and sinners (Lk 7:34 // Mt 11:19). Luke has once also mentioned that, 'the tax-collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.' (Lk 15:1) And besides having table fellowship with sinners and tax-collectors (Lk 5:29 // Mk 2:15 // Mt 9:10, Lk 15:1-2), Jesus did even once openly lodge in the house of a tax-collector, i.e. Zacchaeus, a chief-tax-collector in Jericho (Lk 19:1-10). This was really an extreme radical expression of the love of God to the tax-collectors. Bearing in mind that in those days, a tax-collector was thought of as a sinner and was to be openly despised and rejected by all the people, especially the Pharisees,

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85 This reminds us also of the Parable of the Great Banquet in which the same idea is put forth also by his earnestly forcing 'the πτωχοι the maimed, the lame and the blind' into the great banquet. Lk 14:16-24.

86 See ch.2 section B, under the heading of 'Tax-collectors'.



and yet we still find Jesus here taking the initiative to ask for the lodging in Zacchaeus' house, (v.3) regardless of the murmuring of the people around. (v.7) He even dared to proclaim Salvation to this house of Zacchaeus (v.9). Obviously Zacchaeus being a chief tax-collector, must be rich in wealth and greedy for money (v.2), yet by the encounter with Jesus he changed his attitude so that later he could say to Jesus, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold".<sup>87</sup> In this case, the attitude or the change of attitude of Zacchaeus was quite distinct. On another occasion, Jesus has once taught of a parable of two persons praying in the Temple.<sup>88</sup> Both the self-righteous pharisee and a humble tax-collector make their prayers before God. In the parable

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87 v.8 The saying here is as a promise to Jesus, but some translation seems to change the picture a bit, e.g. Rieu's translation says, "Bear witness, Lord, that I am giving half my fortune to the poor and making fourfold restitution to anyone I have defrauded." See Rieu, The Four Gospels (the Penguin Classics), p.170. In this way, Zacchaeus was affirming his usual practice before Jesus rather than making a promise to Him. But this thinking seems unfit to the whole story especially when Jesus says, 'Today Salvation has come to this house.' (v.9) That in the first place, Salvation seems to be a kind of merit earned by Zacchaeus' being good in the past. This would not be the thinking in Jesus' words. And in the second place, the word 'Today' signifies some changes at the moment that salvation comes at this day. So the RSV translation is more preferable. See also the above reference to Jeremias' words. n.26 p.55.

88 Lk 18:9-14. The story will be discussed in ch.4.



Jesus appreciated the prayer of the latter for the tax-collector is having a proper attitude before God. He said that the prayer of the tax-collector would be heard for the reason that he was really accepting himself as a sinner and asking for God's mercy (v.13), whereas the self-righteous Pharisee was though praising God, was actually affirming his own righteousness. Bear in mind also that a tax-collector was to be despised by all the people that we would marvel too that Jesus even praises the attitude of a tax-collector in one of his parables. This shows that Jesus was different from the people of his time that there was an absence of such hatred to tax-collectors as other Jews had in his time. Besides the incidence of lodging and eating with a tax-collector, Jesus also called tax-collectors to be his disciples, e.g. Levi or Matthew the tax-collector.<sup>89</sup> And among

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89 See Lk 5:29 // Mk 2:14 // Mt 9:9. The three stories are put here in parallel form, suggesting that they are probably recalling the same incidence. If so, then 'Matthew' was probably the other name for Levi. This has been traditionally accepted by the Church. But modern scholars may dispute over the use of 'Matthew' in the gospel of Matthew for in Mt 10:3 in listing the names of the twelve disciples, Matthew deliberately puts 'Matthew the tax-collector', cf. Lk 6:14-16 // Mk 3:16 are without it. One would then ask: were the two stories in Mt 9:9 and 10:3 talking of the same person? Or a form-critic would say, would the writer of the gospel deliberately reproduce the story of calling of Levi and change the name to Matthew so as to attribute it to the apostle Matthew? See Fenton, Matthew p.136. Thus the question would still be raised whether Levi and Matthew were the same person or two different persons. Nevertheless, one thing we are sure that Jesus has been calling tax-collectors to be his disciples, whether be one who is both Levi and Matthew or be two different persons.



the twelve he has chosen, they were mostly of the uneducated common mass, but marvellously Jesus could have dared to trust them with the gospel of the kingdom of God and commanded them to preach to all nations.

Two other groups can be put under the heading of 'the Oppressed'. They are the Samaritans and the Gentiles. For they are the people who were despised and looked down upon by the Jews. The Samaritans were despised for their not having the true blood as the Jews and the Gentiles were not the chosen people of God, even being thought of as 'dogs' by the Jews.<sup>90</sup> Yet in the ministry of Jesus, he does enter into the villages of the Samaritans which the Jews would not do.<sup>91</sup> Luke has specially kept the story of the healing of ten lepers in his gospel telling us that there were ten lepers healed but only one returned and gave thanks to Jesus. Jesus praised

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90 Mt 15:26, see also ch.2 section B, on 'Samaritans and the Gentiles'.

91 e.g. Lk 9:52, 17:11. cf. Jn 4:1-42 tells of the story of Jesus' even preaching to a Samaritan woman, and John remarked also that many Samaritans do believe in Jesus too. It was indeed a successful mission journey in Samaria. One may ask also why did Jesus not allow his disciples to go into the villages of the Samaritans when he was sending them out for mission e.g. Mt 10:5. In fact, it can only mean that at that specific time Jesus did want to limit the immediate mission to the lost sheep of Israel alone, since he was sending them to work in haste, Mt 10:7-14. So it does not imply the sense of hatred or despising of Jesus to the non-Jews. Rather his attitude to the Samaritans would be more explicitly found in Lk 10:33, 17:16. He even had once been labelled by the Jews as a Samaritan. Jn 4:48.



this person and Luke adds that he was a Samaritan. Thus in this story, the position of the Samaritans was highly rated.<sup>92</sup> A famous parable also peculiar to Luke is the parable of a good Samaritan in which Jesus intentionally praises the great compassion of the Samaritan and contrasts it to the selfish wills of the Jewish priest and the Levite.<sup>93</sup> The picture of the story was indeed strange to the contemporary thinking. Jesus even dared to figure out a Samaritan and praised him whom all the Jews despised. In such contrast, we may understand better the attitude Jesus had towards the Samaritans.<sup>94</sup> To the Gentiles, what did Jesus do? This has been quite a difficult topic to say whether Jesus did have the idea of mission to the Gentiles. A glance through the gospels would give us an impression that he was paving the way for Gentile mission, but then one would argue whether that attitude was

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92 Lk 17:11-19. The story is somewhat obscure in its details but the focal point is quite clear that it seems not resting much weight on the miracle itself, but rather the emphasis was on the returning and giving thanks of the Samaritan that effected Jesus' remark: "Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (v.18) See also Beare, The Earliest Records of Jesus pp.184f, Caird, St. Luke pp.194f.

93 Lk 10:30-37. It was a parable told before a self-righteous lawyer (v.25) and here Jesus deliberately put forth the picture of a Samaritan which was to be despised by all Jews.

94 If it was so, then Mt 10:5 could not imply any hatred or despise of Jesus to the Samaritans and Gentiles. For if he did, he would not have taught the parable in this strange way.



really in Jesus' mind. For example, we read of passages saying, 'the gospel must be preached to all nations (= Gentiles)<sup>95</sup>, even the disciples would have to bear testimony before the Gentiles (Mt 10:18). But then in another instance we do find a strong attitude against the gentile mission, that is, when Jesus was sending the disciples to preach, he charged them to 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Mt 10:5). Again in Mt 15:24 Jesus reminds his disciples of his special mission only to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel'. J. Jeremias argues from the fact that the language and the style of Mt 10:5 was quite old that it would be a sound base for portraying the attitude of Jesus.<sup>96</sup> He concludes that Mt 10:5 does not mean that Jesus would exclude the Gentiles from the Kingdom, however, he continues to say, it does mean that Jesus does not expect a mission among the Gentiles.<sup>97</sup> Still, he argues that Jesus does have the vision that people from other nations, will one day sit at tables in the kingdom of God.<sup>98</sup> Perhaps the point is that in Mt 10:5-15

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95 e.g. Mk 13:10, Lk 24:47, Mt 24:14, 28:19.

96 See Jeremias, Jesus Promise to the Nations. SBT No.24 pp.19f.

97 See *ibid*, pp.25ff, also Theology, vol.I pp.133f.

98 Lk 13:28f // Mt 8:11f. See also Jeremias, Jesus' Promise to the Nations. pp.55-73.



// Lk 10:1-12 the sending of the disciples was for a specific mission to the lost sheep of Israel (Mt 10:6), plus the fact that he requires his disciples to do so with haste.<sup>99</sup> That Jesus would not allow them to preach to the Gentiles, but rather to go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt 10:5f). Thus the saying in Mt 10:5 does not necessarily imply a negative attitude of Jesus toward the Gentiles.<sup>100</sup> On the contrary, there have been kept two stories in the gospels concerning Jesus' helping the Gentiles. We may go into the two stories and find the attitude of Jesus to the Gentiles from them.

The first story is the story of the healing of a centurion's servant.<sup>101</sup> In the story, Jesus praises the faith of the Centurion saying that, "Not even in Israel have I found such faith."<sup>102</sup> and he does what has been asked - by saying a

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99 cf. especially Lk 10:4 // Mt 10:9f, the saying of 'Do not salute anyone on the road' gives the impression that the journey was to be done in a hurry. There is only one parallel saying in the OT, in II Kg 4:29, and it was having the same sense of urgent errand.

100 See also the above discussion on Samaritans. p.22f.

101 Lk 7:1-10 // Mt 8:5-13. Matthew tells of the centurion approaching Jesus directly asking him to heal his servant, whereas Luke says some elders of the Jews went to ask for him.

102 Lk 7:9 // Mt 8:10. Matthew adds also the saying, "I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer



word and the servant is healed. (Lk 7:10 // Mt 8:13) From the whole story recorded. Jesus did not reject any of the request of the centurion (or the elders of the Jews on behalf of the centurion). When he was told about the servant lying in distress, he immediately replied, "I will come and heal him."<sup>103</sup> And in the saying, "Go, be it done for you as you have believed" (Mt 8:13) he was indeed without hesitation in offering help.

The other story is about Jesus helping a Syrophoenician woman by casting the demon out of her daughter.<sup>104</sup> In both the Marcan and Matthean records, there is the same saying, "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."<sup>105</sup> Was it the real meaning of Jesus to reject her?

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darkness....." (v.11f) cf. Lk 13:28f. Luke puts it in another context. But Matthew may have here implied that this is the lesson we should learn from this story that because of faith, Gentiles would also be accepted.

- 103 Fenton in his commentary on St. Matthew stressed the fact that Jesus would not go himself under the roof of a Gentile for in fact. He had not done so. Yet he has forgotten this point that Jesus was saying: I will come and heal him. A definite reply of His own will. cf. Fenton. St. Matthew p.124.
- 104 Mk 7:24-30 // Mt 15:21-28. Mark says it was a Greek, a Syrophoenician woman, while Matthew says it was a Canaanite woman. Possibly the two means the same.
- 105 Mt 15:26 // Mk 7:27, Mark has a slightly different wording, he says, "Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs". i.e. Mark here though accepting the view that it is not right to take bread to the dogs, but in so saying he allows



Or was it a test for her faith?<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, at last Jesus did offer help to her.<sup>107</sup> He did not totally reject the request of the Gentiles and from these two stories we can say that Jesus did have an open mind to them and offer help to them when they come to him.

Before I end up this section, there is still another group that we should not neglect. Luke especially has a

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the possibility for the Gentile mission, thus "Let the children first be fed." Matthew has his own way of presenting the story, cf. the notes below.

106 Mt 15:24 suggests the former, and Mk 8:29 seems to suggest the latter.

107 Matthew here has an expanded version of Mark. The various additions may suggest to us some special interest of Matthew. Fenton suggests that the story here in fact signifies the situation of the Church at the time when the problem of acceptance of Gentile was raised, e.g. Acts 10f, 15, and Matthew here may reflect his own attitude to this problem. cf. Fenton St. Matthew p.254. This may account for the various expansions in Matthew's story and from it we can trace the special interests of Matthew. What does Matthew add to the story? Three things are peculiar to Matthew: a) Jesus was silent for a while (v.23a) - this may suggest his deliberation of a delay of time b) The disciples asked him to send her away (v.23b) - this may signify the opposition of some of the disciples as : "Dismiss her, do let her bother us" or as Fenton suggests too, it may mean: 'Do what she asks and so let her go away.' Either of them was signifying the reaction of the early Christian's attitude towards the Gentiles. c) Jesus' saying: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v.24) - A saying parallel to Mt 10:6 may remind us of Jesus' special concern as when he sent the disciples for mission (Mt 10). The point Matthew tells the story in this prolonged way may signify a delay of time or an intercession for the acceptance of Gentile Mission within the Church and it reflected also in this story of helping a Gentile woman.



special interest in telling stories of women. (e.g. Lk 7:36-52, 8:1-3, 43-47, 10:38-42, 13:11-17, 13:21, 15:8-10, 23:27, 49,55f, 24:1-11 etc.) 'The women' may belong to the group of oppressed, being looked down upon in some degree of degradation by men. We should pick it out here as a special group as we can find in Luke's gospel, they have been taken with special interests. Donald Guthrie in his New Testament Introduction has also made such remarks: "Luke, as a Gentile, would know much of the degradation of women in his days and would be concerned to emphasize all he had heard of the attitude of the Lord towards them." (p.91)

To choose a passage peculiar to Luke which describes Jesus' dealing with the women, we may take Lk 7:36 - 8:3 where we have two types of women serving Jesus differently during his ministry. Firstly, Lk 7:36-52 tells of a woman in the house of Simon, who served Jesus by anointing him with ointment (v.38). Here in the story, Luke focuses on Jesus' attitudes towards this woman, and twice it has been said that the woman was a sinner (v.37, v.39)<sup>108</sup>. Despite the

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108 A similar story yet with much variants was told by Matthew and Mark, but there the question rests on the anticipation of the burial of Jesus and the waste of costly ointment without mentioning of the character of the woman, but here in Luke, it is specially said so and also the reaction of Pharisees was stressed, followed by Jesus' explanation in the parable of the two debtors. cf. Mt 26:6-13 // Mk 14:3-9.



questioning in heart of the Pharisees in the house, Jesus showed great generosity in accepting the deeds of the sinful woman. The picture of the story also reminds us of the common rules of the Jews in those days to keep flinched from contact with an unclean person, yet Jesus again broke their tradition. He openly allowed the sinful woman standing behind him at his feet, making wet his feet with her tears, kissing his feet and anointing them with ointment (v.38). To answer the murmuring of the Pharisees, he told the parable of the two debtors to draw their attention to the forgiveness of sins behind her affectionate love. The Pharisees saw the woman as a condemned sinner, whereas Jesus saw through her display of love and gratitude, a pardoned sinner.<sup>109</sup> Besides telling this story of a sinful woman anointing Jesus, Luke also provides us with another group of women of a different social status who have the same devotion to Jesus. Lk 8:1-3 tells of some well-to-do women who had been with Jesus along his ministry and provided food for him and his disciples out of their means. They are the women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: such as Mary called Magdalene,

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109 Surely Jesus would not mean that by her showing of love she has earned her forgiveness, rather it was the display of love that proved the fact of her having been forgiven. See also G.B. Caird, St. Luke p.114f.



from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others. They were women of some wealth who could provide for the needs of Jesus and his disciples. All the three gospels agree to give us a picture that during Jesus' ministry, especially during the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, there have also been such group of women following Jesus. They went with him even from Galilee up to Jerusalem, as far as to see the death and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>110</sup> Other stories may as well be mentioned too: the story of a woman with hemorrhage (Lk 8:43-47), the story of Jesus' visit to the house of Mary and Martha (Lk 10:38-42), the story of the healing of a stooping woman (Lk 13:11-17) and the helping of a syrophoenician, Gentile woman (Mk 7:24-30). Bearing in mind the contemporary attitude to woman, we would/marvel at all these dealings of Jesus with them.

#### F. Summary

By now we have gone through all the stories of Jesus' dealing with the poor, and by summing up we may understand

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110 e.g. Lk 23:49, 55f, 24:1-10 // Mt 27:55f, 28:1-8 // Mk 15:40f, 47, 16:1ff. The recalling of the names of the women were not fully identical, but nevertheless, they were all included among the group of women who came from Galilee and they were eye-witnesses to what had happened in Jerusalem then.



also what good news Jesus was really preaching to them. He preaches to them that the kingdom of God has come and that they are also to be included in the kingdom. That is to say, the Lord has heard their crying and now comes to fulfil the promises which he had for them. The Lord is really caring for and showing concern to them, not only in words, but also in actions. This lovingkindness and mercy of the Lord has been actualized in Jesus' ministry in the forgiveness of their sins and in the healing of their various diseases so that "He takes our infirmities and bears our diseases."<sup>111</sup>; in the casting out of demons, as releasing them from the power of Satan, thus manifesting also the coming of the kingdom of God on earth; and in his having friendship and sharing table fellowship with the rejected. All these demonstrate in actual fact the lovingkindness and mercy of the Lord to the poor. From our study in this chapter, we understand that some are poor in the physical sense, some are social, some are religious and even some are spiritually poor. Yet upon all of them is the lovingkindness and mercy of God poured, regardless of what sense of poor they are. As a matter of fact, though

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111 Mt 8:17 quoted from Is 53:4 cf. Matthew as distinct from LXX. See also the section on 'The Blind' n.65 p.73.



some of them seemed to be poor in one aspect, indeed they are poor also in other aspects too. To give one illustration, we may recall the story of Zacchaeus, the chief tax-collector in Jericho. He is indeed rich in wealth.<sup>112</sup> Yet being a tax-collector, he is socially despised by the people. Religiously too, he is labelled as within the group of sinners, unacceptable to the kingdom of God. Spiritually, he is aware of his own spiritual poverty in that he needs the love of God in the depth of his heart. Thus we may see also in this example that when Zacchaeus is poor in one aspect he is also poor in other aspects too - only that he is still a wealthy man. Nevertheless, no matter what sense of poor one is to be, the love and mercy of the Lord is always available. It is indeed the mission of Jesus to bring them the good news, respective to the kind of poverty they are in. It is his good news to those sinners that their sins are forgiven now, and it is his good news to the blind and the sick that their blindness and sickness is now healed, and to the captives that they are set free now, and also good news to those being rejected that they are now even acceptable to God. That is why we see Luke quoting this saying from the Book of Isaiah

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112 Lk 19:2 for the story see pp.83f.



as an introduction to Jesus' ministry, that:-

"That spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the  $\pi\tau\omega\chi\omicron\iota$ . He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Lk 4:18f).

It is not because 'the poor' have done anything that they are now deserving the good news. Rather it is from the will of the Lord that he now proclaims the good news to them. Thus, as Mark puts it, Jesus began his ministry by saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.'<sup>113</sup> The kingdom of God which he preaches brings salvation and new possibilities of life to many. To one he says, "Son, your sins are forgiven..... Rise..... go home." (Lk 5:20 // Mk 2:5 // Mt 9:2) and to another, "Your faith has made you well, go in peace" (Lk 7:50, 8:48 etc.) To some he says, "Come, follow me" (Mt 4:19, 9:9, Mk 1:17, 2:14 ,..... etc.) and to still another, he says,

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113 Mk 1:14f cf. Mt 4:17. The word = at hand, near. But C.H. Dodd has interpreted it as 'realized eschatology', i.e. the kingdom of God has come already in Jesus' time. J. Jeremias's view, on the other hand would be more balanced when he says it is both 'present and future'. Indeed it is both 'already and not yet'. See also C.H. Dodd The Parable of the Kingdom and Jeremias' Parables of Jesus.



"Salvation has come to this house today." (Lk 19:9). He indeed opens new possibilities of life to many, and people would experience new lives in listening to and following him. What is the new life in the kingdom of God? It involves a new relationship with both God and man. What do people do to experience this new life in the kingdom? As he requests, it is to 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' (Mt 4:17) and to 'Repent and believe in the gospel' (Mk 1:15b). So, repentance and trust is the key to new life. Here, we may examine briefly the meaning of these two words. It is the calling to repent, like the tax-collector who prays in the temple, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."<sup>114</sup> or like the Prodigal son's returning to the father's home;<sup>115</sup> and have faith in God, like the centurion who asks Jesus to heal his servant by a word,<sup>116</sup> or like the father of the epileptic boy

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114 Lk 18:13. The story is peculiar to Luke. We will discuss it fully in the next chapter.

115 Lk 15:11-32. The story is also peculiar to Luke. Though Geldenhuys has somewhat allegorized the parable, telling it as 'A gospel within the gospel', he has indeed drawn a vivid picture describing what true repentance is meant in this parable. See Luke pp.406ff.

116 Lk 7:1-10 // Mt 8:5-13. In the story Jesus has remarked: 'Not even in Israel have I found such faith' Lk 7:9 // Mt 8:10. See also n.102, p.89.



who says, "I believe, help my unbelief."<sup>117</sup> Jesus also once said to his disciples, "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."<sup>118</sup> The turning, *επιστροφή* signifies one's repentance,<sup>119</sup> and the becoming a child signifies also the point of having simple faith in God. As a child is totally dependent and trusts in his father, so are those who enter into the kingdom of God. They are to behave as the children of God. So those who receive the kingdom must turn back to God and learn to think of themselves as God's children. It should be noted here also that Jesus does not think of God as the universal father and man as his children by nature. Rather he is inviting people to have this relationship with God, out of their own will.<sup>120</sup> And if they do so they will have the new life of the kingdom. This is the good news

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117 Mk 9:24, cf. Mt 17:15 where Matthew says he is an epileptic, see also n.43, p.64.

118 Mt 18:3, cf. Mk 10:15 bears the same meaning when it says "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

119 The Greek word *επιστροφή* denotes the meaning of change inwardly of one's mind. See Arndt and Gingrich's Lexicon pp.778f. It bears the same meaning as *μετανοία* = repentance, which also denotes the change of one's mind. See *ibid.* p.513. Thus they are synonyms here.

120 See J. Jeremias, The Central Message of NT ch.1 pp.9-30.



Jesus preaches.<sup>121</sup> He has indeed introduced a radical understanding of God as the father in that he teaches us to address God as <sup>ʾ</sup>Abbā ; hence, we can now begin our prayer with "Father ....."<sup>122</sup>. Since he is our heavenly father, we can ask him for our needs; so Jesus says: 'Ask, and it will be given to you..... For if you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.'<sup>123</sup> He teaches us to have simple trust in God as our father, for he says: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on..... Your father knows that you need them." (Lk 12:22,30). He will certainly provide for your needs, so simply trust in him as a child does to his father. "Fear not, little flock, for

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121 For this understanding, see C.H. Dodd, The Founder of Christianity ch.4 esp. pp.74ff. Also J. Jeremias, Theology Vol.I ch.5 sect. 18 and 19.

122 Lk 11:2 'Father' is most likely a literal translation of <sup>ʾ</sup>Abbā , cf. Mt 6:9 where it says, "Our father, who art in heaven" and reflects some kind of liturgical practice, probably a later elaboration. For this point see discussion in Jeremias, op.cit p.195. For Lk 11:2, Alexandrius and Bezae codexes follows Matthew's version, probably having gone through the same process as the Matthean version. Also for the significance of this radical understanding, read Jeremias Theology pp.61ff and The Central Message of NT ch.1 pp.9-30.

123 Mt 7:11 cf. Lk 11:13 where Luke has 'Holy Spirit' for 'good things', probably he is having in mind of experience of receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost. cf. Acts 2. See also E.E. Ellis, Luke p.164.



it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (v.32). That is the significance of being a child of God, that Jesus is teaching us to learn to be the children of God, having total dependance and full trust in God as our father. So that, we now need not be anxious about our lives, but live with simple trust in the providence of God our father.

Being the children of God carries another imperative to our lives too. That is, as the children of God, we ought to follow and obey what the father wills and demands. It is in this way that we establish a new relationship also with our fellow man.<sup>124</sup> Jesus teaches that the greatest commandment is - 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'<sup>125</sup> This summary of the Law is not unknown in the Jewish literature,<sup>126</sup> it rather shows Jesus'

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124 See again J. Jeremias, Theology, pp.211ff.

125 Mk 12:30f // Mt 22:34f. cf. Lk 10:25ff Luke has a totally different context from Mark and Matthew. He even put the statement into the mouth of the Scribe (lawyer) who asks of the greatest commandment. It may probably be another story, or at least as the story goes, Luke's interest rests not on the greatest commandment but rather on the story of the Good Samaritan which Jesus tells afterward.

126 e.g. Test. Issachar v.2. See also Cranfield Mark p.379, David Hill Matthew p.306f.



acceptance of this way of expression. That is, He is agreeing to the statement of 'loving God..... loving man' as the best summary of all the commandments of the law and the prophets. (cf. Mt 22:40). That the commandment of God is to love the Lord whole-heartedly,<sup>127</sup> and to love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>128</sup> This commandment reminds us of the saying about the will of God quoted twice in Matthew's gospel: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'.<sup>129</sup> The word 'mercy' is a direct translation from the Hebrew word  $\text{חַסֵּד}$ , meaning loyalty and faithfulness.<sup>130</sup> The word is then developed to mean also kindness, grace and mercy, especially the mercy of God.<sup>131</sup> While  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  is used

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127 Especially the quotation from Deut 6:4-5, Mark and Matthew both add 'with all your mind' which is non-existent in the OT and LXX translation, but probably it is to add the emphasis of whole person involved.

128 'The second'  $\delta\epsilon\upsilon\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha$  as in Mk 12:31 // Mt 22:39 may not mean 'second in importance', but 'a second which is as important, of equal gravity, only 'second of a series'. cf. Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon p.176, also David Hill, op.cit p.307. Both 'love God..... love men' together comprises the greatest commandment without either part it is not complete. cf. also I Jn 4:21.

129 Mt 9:13, 12:7, both are quoted from Hosea 6:6. The quotation tells of Jesus' allegiance to the prophetic interpretation of the will of God as such.

130 See Holladay, A Concise Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the OT p.111.

131 e.g. Ps 33:5, 86:15, Ex 34:6, Neh 9:17, Jon. 4:2..... etc.







refuting their status as being the sons of God, but rather he is telling them to actualize their relationship with God in this ethical term as 'to love your enemy'.<sup>135</sup>

In summary, it is the good news that Jesus brings to the poor: that now they are acceptable to God, that salvation has come from Him and even that they now can be the children of God. For this is the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk 4:20). And, as the children of God, we are to learn to trust and obey Him. To trust him, as a child trusts his father, that we are to have total dependence and full trust in His divine providence. 'Do not be anxious of your life' is the motto. And to obey him is to listen and to follow his divine will, namely to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Even to 'to merciful as the father is merciful'. This is another motto for the children of God. 'For as he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. So be merciful even as your father is merciful.' (Lk 6:35f).

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<sup>135</sup> See also E.E. Ellis comments on Lk 6:35 saying that 'be sons' = 'to reflect God's nature'. Luke p.116.



Chapter IV JESUS AND THE RICH

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In the previous chapter, I have attempted to understand the concept of poor in four different aspects, namely the physical, social, religious and spiritual aspects of poor. Those materially poor and physically handicapped are the physical poor; those who are captives or oppressed are the socially poor; those who are within the religious realm being labelled as sinners are the religiously poor; and those like Zacchaeus are conscious in their mind~~of~~ of their own need for the love of God are the spiritually poor. And certainly as we have said also in the last chapter that a person who is poor in one aspect would probably be poor in other aspects too and in fact we did find also that they are all within the same group. The four aspects are only ways of looking at them from different angles. As now we come to 'Jesus and the Rich', the concept of 'rich' can be deduced from this concept of poor too, as the opposite of it. The idea of 'rich' here is not limited to those who are physically or materially rich, but includes all the other aspects too.

#### A. Who are 'the Rich'?

We may again start by examining the gospels to see the people Jesus meets in his ministry who can be said to be under this group. They are, as we will find, the people who are wealthy, i.e. materially rich, those who are in authority, the social and religious leaders in Jesus' time, and those

whom we may call the theologians and the most pious people, the thought-to-be spiritually rich people. The first group, those who are materially rich, can be easily identified. For instance, there is a rich young man running up to Jesus asking him of eternal life,<sup>1</sup> a rich chief tax-collector Zacchaeus in whose house Jesus openly take lodging and in his house Jesus sits at table with him,<sup>2</sup> and a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who is a disciple of Jesus too.<sup>3</sup> The second group, those who are in authority, are mainly the chief priests and the elders of the people, who constitute the supreme court of dispute for the Jews, i.e. the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. They are in fact both social and the religious leaders of that time. The third and the last group are those whom we may call, in modern terms, the theologians and the most pious people of the time. They are constantly mentioned in the gospels as the Scribes and the Pharisees.

These people, though they are socially reckoned as rich in outlook, either materially as the wealthy, or socially and religiously as the authorities in the Sanhedrin, or

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1 Lk 18:18-25 // Mk 10:17-22 // Mt 19:16-22. See also ch.3 section B 'The πτωχοι'.

2 Lk 19:1-10. See also ch.3 section E 'the oppressed'.

3 Mt 27:57ff. See also the next section 'the wealthy'.



spiritually as the theologians and the pious group; yet Jesus says the reverse of them. To those who strive hard for amassing wealth, Jesus says, "He who lays up treasure for himself, is not rich toward God." (Lk 12:21) The same would apply to those who are rich in other aspects too. In his sermon on the plain, on one hand he preaches: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk 6:20ff); at the same time on the other hand, he preaches: "Woe to you that are rich for you have received your consolation." (v.24). Indeed, he has pronounced a fourfold 'woes' to the people who are rich:-

'Woe to you that are rich!

Woe to you that are full!

Woe to you that laugh!

Woe to you when you are sure of yourselves!'<sup>4</sup>

Thus he has completely reversed the world's value and attitude towards the rich. What then are his charges against the rich? We shall examine his ministry to see what his attitude is towards this group of people.

#### B. The Wealthy

Does Jesus hate those who are wealthy? Especially when he says 'Woe to you that are rich', does he lay curses on the wealthy simply because they are wealthy? By having a glance through the gospel, we can find that Jesus does have friendly associations with wealthy people. We can read of a

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<sup>4</sup> Lk 6:24ff. Here quoted Jeremias' version. From Theology p.142.



story of a rich young man who comes up to Jesus, kneels before him and asks him about eternal life. Jesus loves the young man.<sup>5</sup> We can also read of Jesus' making friends with a rich chief tax-collector, Zacchaeus. He even takes lodging in his house despite the people's murmuring about his action.<sup>6</sup> Zacchaeus is both a tax-collector and a rich man, yet Jesus still has open friendship with him. Another instance is a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph. Indeed, as Mark and Luke record, he is a respectable member of the council and a good and righteous man. Matthew adds that he is a disciple of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> He goes up to Pilate after the death of Jesus and asks for the burial of the body of Jesus

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5 See Mk 10:17,21. When compared with the parallel story in Luke and Matthew, we find that Mark describes the picture in more detail than the other two gospels. Thus he gives fuller information about the rich young man's attitude to Jesus and Jesus' attitude to the man.

6 Lk 19:1-10 esp. v.2, 5, 7 See also ch.3 p.42.

7 See Lk 23:50ff // Mk 15:43ff, cf. Mt 27:57ff. Matthew has changed the Marcan and Lucan phrase 'a member of the council' to 'a rich man'. His intention would probably be the thinking of the fulfillment of the passage of Is 53:9 which describes the burial of the Servant of God. Read also R.H. Gundry's the Use of OT in St. Mt's Gospel. The discussion on the allusion of Is 53:9 in Mt 27:57 esp. p.204. In fact, these changes of phraseology do not change the essential meaning at all. A member of the council would probably be rich at the same time. Mark even says he was a 'respected' member of the council, cf. Jerusalem Bible = 'prominent'. Jeremias refers him as a rich landowner. See Jerusalem p.223. Would he then not be a prominent member of the council because of his being rich? Thus Matthew does not change the meaning when he says he was a rich man.



in his own tomb.<sup>8</sup> Thus we understand that Jesus does not reject the wealthy simply because they are wealthy. Rather he openly makes friends with them and even has disciples who are from the wealthy class. We would not forget also Luke's specific account of some women who follow Jesus through villages. Some of them belong to the wealthy class and as Luke records, they even provide out of their means supplies for Jesus and his disciples.<sup>9</sup> Jesus accepts their offerings. Thus Jesus has an open and friendly attitude towards the wealthy.

But what then are his charges against the wealthy? We understand that of the three gospels, Luke is concerned the most with people who are wealthy and people who are poor. Concerning the wealthy, Luke has specially mentioned Jesus' friendly associations with them (e.g. Lk 8:2-3, 19:1-10), but at the same time, he is also constantly reminding us Jesus' many charges against their wrong attitudes towards riches. To see what charges Jesus lays against them, we may read again the story of the rich young man who asks Jesus of

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8 Read Mt 27:58ff//Lk 23:52f//Mk 15:43ff.

9 Luke has mentioned their names as Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward and Susanna (Lk 8:2f).



eternal life. Mark draws a fuller picture for us so that we can see how the man comes eagerly and kneels humbly before Jesus, earnestly asking for the key to eternal life.<sup>10</sup> Jesus, knowing that the man has even kept the commandments since his youth, looks at him and loves him.<sup>11</sup> But when Jesus tells him to sell his possessions and give to the poor, the man changed suddenly. As Mark describes, "At that saying (of Jesus), his countenance fell and he went away sorrowfully."<sup>12</sup> We can understand that the reason why he departs from Jesus is because he values the riches that he has more than the eternal life in the kingdom of God. This may be the problem that is a peril to people who are wealthy. That is why Jesus then remarks: "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!..... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."<sup>13</sup> What is wrong with this rich

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10 Mk 10:17. cf. Mt 19:16 only says: 'And behold one came up to him' and Lk 18:18 simply: 'And a ruler asked him.'

11 v.21 It is also peculiar to Mark.

12 v.22 For this both Matthew and Luke has parallel descriptions Matthew: 'Sorrowful', Luke: 'Sad', cf. Mt 19:22, Lk 18:23.

13 Mk 10:23, 25 // Lk 18:24f // Mt 19:23f. Mark adds a verse in between the two sayings "How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God" - The words underlined are added by Codex Bezae and some other MSS, whereas Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus and others are without it. Probably the clause is inserted to make



young man? - We may still question. Jesus has commented to the man that he still lacks one thing,<sup>14</sup> and that is, 'Go, sell what you have and give to the πτωχοι, and you will have treasure in heaven and come, follow me.'<sup>15</sup> E.E. Ellis has rightly remarked that here Jesus points his finger on one commandment which is not mentioned, namely 'Do not Covet'.<sup>16</sup> The rich man cannot meet the demand of Jesus, thus proves himself to be indeed covetous and selfish. That one thing he is still lacking is to keep the commandment - 'Do not covet', and be willing to share his things with other. Interestingly too, a noncanonical parallel has been found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews,<sup>17</sup> which also illustrates this point. To recall the story, it says -

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v.24 clearer and to bring it into closer connection with the context. For surely v.24 must go into the same context with v.23 and 25 in which the saying is referring to 'the rich' and 'those who have riches'. Luke and Matthew simply omit the whole verse to make the sayings more concise. Also the word 'camel' in Greek = κάμηλον. Cyril of Alexandria has suggested that κάμηλον in the text might be a corruption of κάμιλον = 'a rope'. The latter would certainly make good sense, i.e. 'A rope passing through the eye of a needle.' But the weight of MSS evidence remains in favor of κάμηλον = 'camel'. See also Cecil Hargreaves: Notes on the Translation and Text of St. Mark's gospel in Greek.p.74.

14 Mk 10:21 // Lk 18:22, Matthew has rather 'If you would be perfect' - the meaning is the same that there is something more to be done.

15 Mk 10:21 // Lk 18:22 // Mt 19:21.

16 Compare Lk 18:20 // Mk 10:19 // Mt 19:18 where the commandment 'Do not covet' is missed. See The Gospel of Luke p.218.

17 As quoted in Gospel Parallels, ed. by B.H. Throckmorton, p.130n.



The second of the rich men said to him, "Teacher, what good thing can I do and live?" He said to him, "Sir, fulfil the law and the prophets." He answered, "I have." Jesus said, "Go sell all that you have and distribute to the poor; and come, follow me." But the rich man began to scratch his head, for it did not please him. And the Lord said to him, "How can you say, I have fulfilled the law and the prophets, when it is written in the law: You shall love your neighbor as yourself; and lo, many of your brothers, sons of Abraham, are clothed in filth, dying of hunger, and your house is full of many good things, none of which goes out to them?". And he turned and said to Simon, his disciple, who was sitting by him, "Simon, son of Jonah, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

This seems to be a good commentary on the synoptic accounts that the rich young man cannot say he has fulfilled the law, while he is yet not loving his neighbors. The arguments is : How can we say we are loving our brothers when they are in need and at the same time we are storing much for ourselves, giving no hands to meet their needs. This rightly points to the charges that Jesus is laying on the wealthy. It is not because that they are rich, but because they do not use their riches properly and not living to the love and justice as demanded by God.

Jesus has once taught of a parable of a rich fool.



Before he tells the parable, he first makes a remark: "Take heed, and beware of all covetous; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possession."<sup>18</sup> The remark sets the focus on the theme of 'beware of all covetousness', and the parable tells of a rich man striving for massive wealth, thus manifesting his covetousness. Again it is the same charge as we have seen to the young man. Here, the rich man stores up goods for himself and says to himself,<sup>19</sup> "You have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." (Lk 12:19) But after he dies, the goods become of no use to himself. The parable thus tells that the man is wrong because he thinks of wealth as everlasting treasure, not knowing that one day when he dies, it will become nothing then. It will no longer be his possessions then. Thus, says Jesus, "So is he who lays up treasures for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Lk 12:21) "For (indeed) a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possession." (v.15) It is this attitude of mind that pushes them

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18 Lk 12:15. This was Jesus' answer to a man who asked him to divide the inheritance between the man and his brother.

19 See Lk 12:19. The word 'soul' in Greek = ψυχή, psyche can mean 'life' too, i.e. 'my soul' means 'my life' too, thus speaking to one's soul is in fact speaking to oneself.



to strive for making wealth themselves' and that makes them shortsighted and not knowing that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. By now, we can see why Jesus requires the rich young man to sell his possession and give to the poor. Another point we should note that Jesus tells the man that by selling his possessions, he is laying up treasures in heaven (Mk 10:21). The man is asking of eternal life, life in the kingdom of heaven, so that Jesus is now turning his eyes from 'the treasures he has on earth' to 'the treasure in heaven'.<sup>20</sup> The way of laying up treasures in heaven is to give up treasures on earth. Or in other words, life in the kingdom of heaven is not to be earned by storing up treasures on earth, but rather it is the giving up of the treasures on earth that signifies the kind of life in the kingdom of heaven. In another instance, Jesus says also: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Therefore), sell your possessions and give alms, provide yourselves with purses that do not

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20 cf. also Mt 6:19f "Do not lay up for yourselves, treasures on earth..... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven". Here the focal point lies not in 'for yourselves' but in comparing treasures 'on earth' and 'in heaven', for it is followed with: 'for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' v.21. In other places, we find Jesus telling people not to store up treasures for themselves. e.g. Lk 12:21, also 18:18-23 // Mk 10:17-22 // Mt 19:16-22.



grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail  
 .....<sup>21</sup> It is stated explicitly that life in the kingdom  
 is not to be earned but is given freely out of the good  
 pleasure of the Father.<sup>22</sup> And then by selling our possessions,  
 it may signify the point that we are not trusting riches as  
 means for access into the kingdom.<sup>23</sup> So this is another point  
 where Jesus contradicts the views of the wealthy. On the one  
 hand he accuses them that they are covetous by storing up  
 wealth for themselves and neglecting needs of others; and  
 on the other hand, he corrects their thinking that life in  
 the kingdom is not to be earned by their riches but is given  
 by the good pleasure of the Father. The saying of giving up  
 treasures on earth as gaining treasures in heaven thus re-  
 verses the common thinking of the wealthy. It reminds us  
 also of Jesus' saying to his disciples: "For whoever would  
 save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for

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21 Lk 12:32f. The address to 'Little flock' refer to the  
 multitude of Jesus' followers, thus it should be taken  
 as a general demand to all of his followers.

22 Caird is indeed right too in saying that the kingdom is  
 not an other-worldly dream, but "a present possession,  
 realised not by one's own achievement, but by the Father's  
 gift, and guaranteed by his good pleasure, his eternal  
 purpose of grace." See St. Luke p.164.

23 cf. Mk 10:24 "How hard it is for those who trust in riches  
 to enter the kingdom of God. For textual differences.  
 See n.13, p.111.



my sake, will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself."<sup>24</sup>

Before we end up this section we should be reminded also that though riches are a peril to the wealthy, it is at the same time also a peril to those have-nots. The Parable of the rich fool is true to safeguard the wealthy from simply amassing riches for themselves for the whole life. But the same attitude of covetousness and the same idea of pursuit after riches exist also in the heart of those who are not wealthy. So Jesus also teaches the multitude that: "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on." (Lk 12:22) Those who are not wealthy would have their own problems of constantly worrying about what to eat and what to put on, but Jesus rebuked their anxious thought too. When he says: "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions", he is indeed speaking both to the wealthy and to the have-nots. It is perhaps the same anxiety which pushes the wealthy to store up goods for themselves and which causes the have-

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24 Lk 9:24f // Mt 16:25f // Mk 8:35f. Mark has also the phrase "for the gospels' sake" but Luke and Matthew omits it, without changing its essential meanings. The statement is said on the cost of Discipleship and the reason for the denial of oneself, yet it gives a quite distinct attitude to the gains and losses of life which is just the reverse of the common view.



nots to strive for what to eat and what to put on.<sup>25</sup> But Jesus on the one hand points out the wrong attitude of the rich fool by saying that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possession; and on the other hand he also condemns the wrong attitude of his disciples who are anxious about their lives too. He denounces such anxiety as actually pointless, absurd and pagan.<sup>26</sup> It is pointless to worry for anxiety cannot help a bit, even to add a cubit of the span of life (v.25). It is absurd for since God the father cares even for the lilies and the grass to grow, would he not care for those whom he has destined to be his children (vv.26ff). It is even pagan to worry for indeed it means that we do not really believe, nor have enough faith in God our father (v.30). Therefore Jesus stresses, "Do not be anxious about your life." - neither be anxious to store up good for your life (or soul), nor be anxious

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- 25 The key word for the two passages Lk 12:16-21 and Lk 12:22-31 is ψυχή = psyche which can mean both 'soul' 'life'. And for the rich fool, he is storing up goods for his soul = his life or himself, and in v.22 when Jesus says do not be anxious about your life, the same word ψυχή is used, i.e. "Your life" "Your soul" or "Yourself". Both the rich fool or the disciples of Jesus are the same, being anxious about their lives, their soul and themselves, but Jesus rebuked their attitude.
- 26 Lk 12:22-31 gives the full explanation. See also Caird's commentary on the passage St. Luke p.163.



for what to eat or what to put on as though in either case you be able to work a deal by your own anxiousness. So now we may conclude here the charges Jesus lays against the wealthy in two points: Firstly, he is rebuking their attitude of covetousness over riches so that they are not willing to give any to others. In this way, they are contradicting both the commandment of God as 'Do not Covet', and the demand of God which is 'to love your neighbor as yourselves'. Secondly, it is not really a charge, but rather a corrective to their view, that he demands them to give away their possessions as a way of laying up treasures in heaven. This may be a charge to those who trust in riches as means for access to the kingdom. For it is not by our own achievements, but it is by 'the Father's good pleasure' that he gives the kingdom to us. In another word, Jesus is commenting on their misuse and their mistrust of the riches which are given to them. They are using them for their own means, but Jesus demands them to give to others, as a means of showing the love of God to others.

### C. The Authorities

"The authorities" are the social leaders in Jesus' time, and as has been said in the beginning paragraphs, they are the people in the Sanhedrin, whom the gospel writers mention as 'the chief priests, the scribes and the elder'.



Jesus himself does not have much to say about the authorities. The conflict he has with them centred mainly on the last week in Jerusalem. At that time Jesus has openly demonstrated himself as the Messiah since his entry into Jerusalem and this has eventually irritated the authorities.<sup>27</sup> The clash thus started. From examining the affairs Jesus has with them, we may deduce some of his charges upon those authorities.

The entry into Jerusalem gives a picture of the Messianic procession. The following points are found identical in the three gospels.

- a) Jesus' riding on a colt;<sup>28</sup>
- b) People spreading their garments on the road, others spreading leafy branches from the trees;<sup>29</sup>

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27 We are not here to discuss whether Jesus did have the consciousness of his own Messiahship or not, but only that the gospel account of the entry points to the fact of a Messianic demonstration, and on which D.E. Nineham has rightly remarked: 'they (the accounts) include details which..... are unlikely to be the invention of the Early Church'. See St. Mark p.293. Also Cranfield's remark in The Gospel according to St. Mark pp.347ff.

28 Mt 21:7 // Mk 11:7 // Lk 19:35. Mark and Luke both refer to Jesus riding on a colt, but Matthew seems to introduce two animals, 'the ass and the colt' cf. Mt 21:2 'Go into the village..... you will find an ass tied and a colt with her.' He quotes from Zech 9:9 as fulfilling the saying: "Riding on an ass and on a colt, the foal of an ass." Actually in Zech 9:9 it was in the form of Hebrew poetic parallelism, but Matthew may have mistaken it literally to mean two animals, thus introduces a story of two animals. See also R.H. Gundry's discussion in The Use of OT in St. Matthew's Gospel pp.197f, and Fenton, St. Matthew p.330.

29 Mt 21:8 // Mk 11:8 // Lk 19:36, Luke only has 'the garments'.



- c) The crowd crying out, "Hosanna, Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord."<sup>30</sup>

Firstly, the riding on a colt does signify a fulfillment of the prophecy of Zech 9:9. Jesus may have deliberately chosen a colt on which no one has ever sat,<sup>31</sup> and Matthew even points straight forward to the Old Testament passage in Zech 9:9, saying, "This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: 'Tell the daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass.'"<sup>32</sup> The reference in such a way gives

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30 Mt 21:9 has "Hosanna to the Son of David" He figures Jesus here as demonstrating himself as the Son of David. cf. v.15 also. Matthew alone has mentioned Jesus' healing in the temple, also to signify his Messianic character as 'The Son of David.' See also later notes on Mt 21:15. Mk 11:9f has the phrase, "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David that is coming." A very strange expression - 'the kingdom of our father David' which has no parallel elsewhere. Luke and Matthew, on the other hand, have omitted the phrase. Lk 19:38 has rather the cry, "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." Also that "the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice." Luke describes the irritation of some of the Pharisees who spoke to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." But in return Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." Lk 19:39f.

31 Mk 11:2, Cranfield suggests it would very probably be historical as such a detail would more naturally have been remembered than invented. Read The Gospel according to St. Mark pp.349, 353f. Thus, would it not be possible that it was out of Jesus' own deliberation. See also Caird, St. Luke p.216.

32 Mt 21:4ff. This quotation is peculiar to Matthew, though Mark and Luke have obviously the same thought in mind. Matthew has told the story in a way showing the specific fulfillment to this OT passage. See also n.28, p.118.







three gospel writers want to portray for the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. His entry is followed by his working in the Temple which is in fact the more direct blow against the authorities in Jerusalem. For this event, the three gospels give a bit different pictures. The working of Jesus is in threefold ways:

1) Firstly it is the cleansing of the temple.<sup>37</sup> The cleansing is an expressive act of Jesus clothed with prophetic symbolism. The story is: The temple has long been allowed, of course by the temple authorities including the chief priests who are also members of the Sanhedrin; as a place for selling of sacrificial animals and pigeons, and for money-exchange into temple coinage.<sup>38</sup> But Jesus while entering the temple, boldly overturns the tables of the money-exchangers and the seats of those who sell pigeons driving out all who sells and buys in the temple. His dramatic and drastic protest may signify two reasons. (i) The one simple and fundamental reason behind Jesus' action is the charge against the com-

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37 Mk 11:15-18 // Mt 21:12-13 // Lk 19:45-48. All the three gospels has recorded this story, though Mark has put it a day after the entry. That Jesus makes a preliminary visit first in the first day and does the cleansing in the day after. Fenton remarks that on the other hand, the bringing together may result in pointing it to the fulfillment of Mal. 3:1f. Read op.cit. p.332.

38 Lightfoot affirms that it was in the section of the temple called 'the court of the Gentiles' The Gospel Message of St. Mark p.62.



mercialism which threatens the use of the temple as not for worship but instead for making profits. As the original purpose of the temple is for prayers, for bringing men near to God, but now it has been used as 'a den of robbers'.<sup>39</sup>

An explanation of what 'a den of robbers' really means can be vividly found in Jeremiah's saying: "Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered' - only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?"<sup>40</sup> That is to say, the Jewish people are in Jesus time offering regular sacrifices and paying taxes to the temple and making them as an excuse for their wrong deeds. They even say to themselves: 'We are saved' for 'This is the temple of the Lord.' They take the temple as a place for security, guaranteeing their being

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39 Mk 11:17 // Mt 21:13 // Lk 19:46 'A den of robbers' is a phrase from Jer 7:11 where Jeremiah was charging the people for their misuse of the temple and he was at the same time predicting the destruction of the temple as a punishment of the misuse; thus, Jesus here quoting from Jeremiah, may have also the same idea of the coming destruction. This may in fact account for the immediate indignation of the chief priests and the scribes in Mk 11:18.

40 Jer 7:8-11 when Jesus was quoting the phrase, he was probably seeing the parallel scene in his days.



under the protection of the Lord that they can now do whatever they like, even doing what is unfaithful to the Lord. Thus they are making the temple 'a den of robbers'.<sup>41</sup> This is Jesus' charge against the authorities that they have allowed the temple to be as 'a den of robbers', even they themselves are making profits by setting a market place in the temple. This would surely scandalize those authorities that they then sought to destroy him. (Mk 11:18) (ii) The other hidden reason is suggested by Lightfoot, R.H..<sup>42</sup> It is based on the fact that the market has been held in the Court of the Gentiles, plus the significant indication of the Marcan phrase 'for all nations'. The quotation thus cited in Mk 11:17 and the other parallels,<sup>43</sup> has been taken from Is 56:7 which refers to the Lord's action concerning

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41 The Greek words = σπηλαιον λεγεων . λεγεων is a strong word meaning 'robber' or 'pirate' rather than 'thief', and σπηλαιον is also a strong word as a cave used for hiding in safety. See Arndt and Gingrich's Lexicon p.474, p.769. Thus it has been translated as 'a robbers' lair'. See Cranfield, op.cit p.358, and as 'a brigands' cave'. See Nineham op.cit. p.304.

42 See op.cit. pp.62.

43 cf. Mt 21:13 // Lk 19:46. The phrase 'for all nations' is peculiar to Mark, while the other details in the quotation are identical. Lightfoot's argument has been heavily based on this phrase, but unfortunately Luke and Matthew seems not recognise its significance here. Their omission would rather suggest the shifting of the stress on the temple being used as 'a den of robbers'.



the rights and privileges of the Gentiles. Thus the basic concern of Jesus in the cleansing of the temple should be seen as to safeguard the rights and privileges of the Gentiles and the charge is laid on the wrong of the temple authorities who have removed such privileges from the Gentiles.<sup>44</sup>

2) Secondly as Luke has suggested, another factor accounting for the hatred of the Jewish authorities, is the teaching of Jesus in the temple.<sup>45</sup> Luke says, "And he (Jesus) was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him." (Lk 19:47). Thus Luke focuses on the teaching of Jesus daily in the temple as the clue for conflict with the authorities and later comes their questioning on Jesus' authority to do so. (Lk 20:1ff).

3) Matthew, on the other hand, gives quite another picture of Jesus' work in the temple which intensifies his conflict

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44 Read also D.E. Nineham op.cit. p.302. He summarizes the view point of Lightfoot but comments: "It is at any rate an interesting possibility, though the other evangelists did not interpret St. Mark along these lines."

45 Contrasting with Mark who has a fuller account of Jesus' cleansing of the temple, Luke has abbreviated the story in his gospel so that it has become simply an illustration of Jerusalem's unreadiness for the day of God's visit. For this, read Caird, St. Luke p.217. While Mark puts the indignation of the chief priests and the scribes on the scene just after Jesus' saying 'You have made it a den of robbers' (Mk 11:18), Luke on the other hand places it in a new setting by introducing, "And he was teaching daily in the temple." Lk 19:47.



with the authorities in Jerusalem. This is his healing in the temple (Mt 21:14ff). The healing here magnifies the point for the coming of Jesus as the Messiah,<sup>46</sup> that the children cry out in the temple: "Hosanna to the son of David!"<sup>47</sup> The two things together manifest the Messianic character of Jesus. Matthew thus explains: It is these wonderful things which Jesus does, plus the recognition of him as 'the Son of David' that leads to the indignation of the chief priests and the scribes. (Mt 21:15)

So far, the three gospels altogether tell of Jesus' working in the temple in his threefold actions, i.e. the cleansing of the temple, the teaching daily in the temple and the healing of the blind and the lame there. These all

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46 David Hill has remarked: 'The healing of the blind and the lame strengthens the messianic impressions of the event.' See The Gospel of Matthew pp.293f. He also suggests the scene to be a violation to the Pharisaic oral law (comply with Dt 16:16) that the blind and the lame are to be excluded from 'appearing before the Lord in his temple'. *ibid.*

47 Mt 21:15ff, note the recognition of Jesus as 'the son of David', cf. also v.9 'The Son of David' character is manifested by Jesus entry into Jerusalem and his healing of the blind and the lame in the temple. The significance of 'children' here may be seen as a fulfillment of Ps 8:2, that even the children would open their mouths for the praises. This contrasts with the reaction of the chief priests and the scribes who even could not apprehend the cryings of the children. It reminds us of Jesus' earlier words: "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to the babes." Mt 11:25 For this underlying thought of Matthew, see also Fenton, op.cit. p.334.



lead to the reaction of the authorities in Jerusalem that because of these things, they are much irritated and they decide to seek ways to destroy him.<sup>48</sup> From the above discussion, we have found two points in regard to the conflict between them. On the part of the authorities, they do not accept what is openly demonstrated concerning the Messianic character of Jesus. And on the part of Jesus, he has demonstrated dramatic protest against their misuse of the temple.

The charges Jesus lays on the authorities are further magnified in the parables he teaches after this. According to Matthew, there are three parables altogether, (i) Parable of the Two Sons, 21:28-32, (ii) Parable of the Vineyard, 21:33-44, (iii) Parable of the Marriage Feast, 22:1-14<sup>49</sup>. Mark and Luke only keep the second one as the key parable.<sup>50</sup> For this reason, we turn specifically to

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48 See Mk 11:18, Lk 19:47 and Mt 21:15.

49 The last one can be broken into two, the Marriage Feast vv.1-10 and the wedding garment vv.11-14.

50 It may be due to Matthew's elaboration that he adds the first and the third one also into this context to magnify further points of Jesus' charges. Besides the fact that the two parables are not found in Mark and Luke together with the parable of the vineyard, Luke has the third one in a different setting, where it can be seen that 'Luke's version is simpler and may stand closer to the original' - For this discussion, see Beare, The Earliest Records of Jesus p.210f. The first parable is peculiar to Matthew alone, and Fenton suggests that it was only an application here of an original one by Matthew or the Church before him. See op.cit p.339.



the second one, of which the three gospels agree on putting it into the context of Jesus' conflict with the authorities.<sup>51</sup> In all three gospels, there is the same reference to the reaction of the authorities, after Jesus' teaching of the parable, that they do perceive he has told the parable against them. Their response is to seek to arrest him, but they fear the people.<sup>52</sup> What are the charges Jesus lay on them that they would have this reaction in return? The present form of the parable of the Vineyard has been taken for granted as an allegory.<sup>53</sup> That is, the vineyard Jesus is speaking of stands for Israel,<sup>54</sup> the owner stands for God, the tenants for the authorities, i.e. the chief priests and scribes and elders, and the servants for the different prophets whom God has sent

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51 We will study the other two briefly afterward.

52 See Mt 21:45f // Mk 12:12 // Lk 20:19. Matthew says 'parables' to include the Parable of the Two Sons. And in fact, the parables are told in such a way to account for this attitude of the authorities with regard to Jesus; for despite of the variants existing in the three gospels, the statement about their reaction is almost identical in all.

53 It has been argued that since the parable was in the form of an allegory it would unlikely be from the mouth of Jesus. Since C.H. Dodd, The Parable of the Kingdom pp.124-32, and Jeremias, Parables of Jesus pp.55-60 have made this proposal, many have followed this line of thought, e.g. op.cit. pp.208f and Nineham, St. Mark pp.308ff. Still the parable ought not be dismissed merely because of this fact that it is allegorical, cf. Cranfield Mark pp.366ff.

54 cf. Is 5:1ff. The vineyard has long been used by the prophets as referring to the people of Israel. So it would not be impossible for Jesus' adopting the prophetic symbolism. See also Cranfield, op.cit. p.367.



and who have been rejected and persecuted by the authorities.<sup>55</sup> The son of the owner may also stand for Jesus himself.<sup>56</sup> The primary motif of the parable is the warning against those authorities who do not produce fruits from the vineyard and who are killing the prophets of God whom God has sent to collect fruits from them. The failure to produce fruits reminds us of the story of Jesus' cursing of a fig tree during his entry into Jerusalem.<sup>57</sup> It is on this same ground that Jesus passes curses on the Jewish authorities and the fig tree. The cursing of the fig tree is probably an act of

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55 See Mk 12:1-11 // Lk 20:9-18 cf. Mt 21:33-44. Mark and Luke speak of God's sending his servants several times: 'A servant..... another..... and a third' (Lk 20:10ff), but Matthew speaks of sending twice: 'He sent his servants ..... again he sent other servants, more than the first.' (Mt 21:34ff). Here, as Fenton suggests, Matthew may have adopting the contemporary Jewish distinction of two groups of prophets, the former prophets and the latter prophets. Thus we can see that he is explicitly referring the servants of the owner as the prophets sent by God. See Fenton op.cit. p.342.

56 Some may argue that 'the son of the owner' should not be pushed too far as referring explicitly to Jesus himself. But on the other hand it would not be impossible too that Jesus may have this in mind. As Cranfield has shown 'the centre of interest (of the parable) rests on the murder of the owner's son, in which the hearers (the authorities) are surely meant to see a reference to what they themselves are plotting (against Jesus)' Read op.cit. p.368. See also C.K. Barrett's Jesus and the Gospel Tradition pp.27ff.

57 Mk 11:12-14, 20-27 // Mt 21:18-22. Luke has omitted the story, may be for the reason that it is more likely to be a parable, not a miracle story. cf. Lk 13:6-9 which is taken in form of a parable. Or even here, the story should also be taken as an acted parable too. See also Cranfield, op.cit. p.356.



prophetic symbolis.<sup>58</sup> So by cursing it, Jesus is at the same time laying the same charges on the people of Israel that they are as fruitless as the fig tree. This charge of the fruitlessness of the Jewish authorities resembles the other action in the cleansing of the Temple so that both are acted parables, pointing to similar wrongs of the authorities for misusing the temple and failing to produce fruits which the Lord demands, plus the fact that they are now seeking to plot against Jesus.<sup>59</sup> So Jesus tells them that they will soon be facing the judgement of God. That Jesus, here in the parable, poses to them the question: 'What then will the owner of the vineyard do?' (Mk 12:9a // Lk 20:15b // Mt 21:40) The most probable answer is, of course, : "He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others."<sup>60</sup> Thus Jesus is drawing a vivid

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58 Parallel with the OT prophetic practices as in Jer. 27:2, 28:10f, even in NT Acts 21:11f.

59 For the reference to the killing of the son, cf. also Mt 21:39 // Mk 12:8 // Lk 20:15a Mark says the son was killed inside the vineyard and then cast out of it, but Luke and Matthew put it the other way round that "they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him." Here we can trace the further allegorization by Luke and Matthew to assimilate the picture to the fact of Jesus' death which was outside Jerusalem. But the fact is: They are based on the same understanding that the son was referring to Jesus. Otherwise they would not have shaped the picture in this way.

60 Mk 12:9b // Lk 20:16 // Mt 21:41 Mark gives the simplest answer here. Luke adds to it the immediate reaction of the hearer, saying, 'God forbid' (v.16b), whereas Matthew on the other hand puts the answer into the mouth of the



picture for the authorities about the inevitable judgement of God. For this, the authorities cannot stand him for any longer so they then seek to arrest him (Mk 21:45 // Mk 12:12 // Lk 20:19).

The other two parables that Matthew adds magnify further the point of the wrongs of the authorities. The parable of the Two Sons, (Mt 21:28-32) is comparing the authorities with the tax-collectors and the harlots, saying that "Truly, I say to you, the tax-collectors and the harlots (will) go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the harlots believed him; and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him." (vv.31-32) For those tax-collectors and harlots who formerly refused to obey the commands of God as the first son, have then repented at the preaching of John; they are now even in a better case than the authorities who like the second son who only obey God in words, but not in practice. Thus we can see the charges here rest on the authorities' not accepting the authority of John and believing in his words. The

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hearers. The reason would possibly be that Jesus seldom answer his own question, as the usual manner of a rabbi in his days, thus for this reason that Matthew puts it on the mouth of the hearers.



Parable of the Marriage Feast is, on the other hand, stating the fact of the rejection of those who have been invited first, together with the acceptance of the unworthy in the great feast in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>61</sup> It also focuses on the point that the king would one day send his troops to destroy them.<sup>62</sup> Thus it is announcing the impending judgement of God upon the authorities. So all the three parables as found in the gospels are together telling of Jesus' charges against the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. The Parable of the vineyard clearly tells of the wrongs of the authorities in their killing of God's prophets and moreover in their plotting at that time to destroy Jesus too. The other two parables adds also to the accusation that the authorities do not repent at the preaching of John and to the sentence that they will soon be destroyed, and even their cities burnt by the anger of God.

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61 A similar parable is found in Lk 14:16ff, where it has been told to defend Jesus' having table fellowship with the sinners and tax-collectors, on the ground that the Pharisees though were invited first, yet they have refused to come. Here Matthew may have elaborated the story to point also to the fate of those rejected, i.e. referring to the authorities in Matthew's context. vv. 6,7 looks very strange to the story, this may account for Matthew's allegorization and his stress on the 'the treating of the king's servants' and 'the fate of those who has illtreated the servants'. For discussion, see also Beare, op.cit. pp.210f. and Fenton, St. Matthew pp.346ff.

62 The king stands for God, and the rejected stands for the authorities. Also the destruction would probably be referring to the seize of Jerusalem too, especially Mt 22:7 'burned their city' See Fenton, op.cit p.348.



The charges of Jesus remains clearly shown in his dramatic protest in the cleansing of the temple. To sum up, we may again quote the words of Jesus: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nation; but you make it a den of robbers." (Mk 11:17) For further charges Jesus make to the authorities and leaders in his time, we may now come also to his charges on the theologians and the pious ones, in which we may see also charges applied to both groups.

#### D. The Theologians

As we have said before for the sake of clarity in our study, we intend to separate the scribes as 'the theologians' from the Pharisees as 'the pious man of practice'. For the scribes as theologians here, I am referring to the synoptic usage of 'scribes' in general. As to those scribes mentioned together with the chief priests or the elders, we have mentioned them already under the heading of 'The authorities', for they are better included there as people in the Sanhedrin. But in this section, the scribes are those mentioned frequently together with the Pharisees. They are the scribes in general.<sup>63</sup> We may now roughly say that it is against their teachings

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63 For the gospels' understanding, see Appendix I, A. 'The gospel usage of chief priests, scribes and elders' and B. 'The gospel usage of Scribes and Pharisees'. pp. 200f.



that Jesus lays charges on the scribes, and against their practices that he lays charges on the Pharisees.<sup>64</sup>

Before we start with Jesus' charges laid on the theologians, a point should be mentioned here concerning Matthew's portrayal of the scribes in his gospel. As in Luke and Mark, we are definitely certain that in every references to the scribes, they are pictured as the enemies of Jesus. Together with the Pharisees, they are constantly accusing Jesus of neglecting their traditions and contradicting their theologies.<sup>65</sup> But in Matthew, besides this general picture with which Matthew does agree<sup>66</sup>, there are still many incidents, where Matthew seems to not tighten the tension so much but to give a less harsh picture.<sup>67</sup> It is

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64 I am adapting the distinction as proposed by Jeremias throughout my paper. For the detail distinction, see ch.2 the Background, and also Jeremias' Jerusalem, pp.233-267. cf. 'The Gospel usage' in Appendix I B ~~pp.200f.~~

65 e.g. Mk 2:16, 3:22, 7:1ff, Lk 5:17,21,30, 6:7 // 53 etc.

66 e.g. Mt 9:3, 12:38, 15:1,12.

67 e.g. Mt 9:3 // Mk 2:6f // Lk 5:21 compare also the whole context of the story. Matthew seems focus on the matter in question more than the persons in conflict. See Mt 9:11 // Mk 2:16 // Lk 5:30 et.al. He has also added several points about the scribes which gives us a more mild picture of them.



peculiar to Matthew's gospel that we have Jesus saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do." (Mt 23:2f). Although the whole chapter lays serious charges on the scribes and the Pharisees, yet at the beginning we have this statement. He seems to be asking the disciples to listen and observe the teachings of the scribes who are sitting in Moses' seat.<sup>68</sup> They are the authoritative teachers, so we have to open our ears to their teaching. But for their practices, 'do not practice what they do' (Mt 23:36). Thus Matthew adds here a picture of the scribes sitting on Moses' seat - a picture quite different with the general picture we have of the scribes as so definitely the enemies of Jesus. Also he has two other discourses of Jesus mentioning the scribes in a good sense. Matthew 23:34 tells: "Therefore I send you prophets, and wise men and scribes.....", and Mt 13:52 says, "Every scribe who is trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." In these two incidents, there are mentionings of scribes who are followers of Jesus, in the first case

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68 Moses' seat is not simply a metaphor. There was an actual stone seat in front of the synagogue where the scribes who are authoritative teachers sat. Read David Hill, Matthew p.310.



they are sent by him together with the prophets and the wise men, and in the second case, they are trained specially for the kingdom of heaven. Surely they cannot be the scribes who belonged to the Pharisaic party in Judaism, rather they are the scribes who belonged to the Christian communities, whom we may call 'the Christian scribes'. By this we understand that there would have been the existence of scribes as teachers in Church parallel to those in Judaism.<sup>69</sup> Another story peculiar to Matthew recalls typically a scribe coming up to Jesus and asking to follow him, saying, "Teacher, I will follow you whenever you go." (Mt 8:19f) The scribe here is portrayed as one of the disciples of Jesus, or at least he is potentially so.<sup>70</sup> Whether he be a Christian scribe who belongs to the group of disciples or a scribe who belongs to the Pharisaic party as opposition party to Jesus, we cannot definitely tell from the passage. But there are certain hints

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69 So does Fenton says they are Christian scribes, not the Jewish scribes of Judaism in Jesus' days. Read Fenton, St. Matthew p.230, 376, see also David Hill, op.cit. p.240, 314.

70 David Hill does comment on Mt 8:19, saying: "In Matthew's gospel, the scribes play a more important role than in other Gospels: together with the pharisees and elders, they constitute the opposition to Jesus. But here..... they are not cast in the role of opponents, but of potential (if not actual) disciples." See Hill, op.cit. pp.161f.



suggesting the latter. Firstly, Fenton has suggested that this scribe should be a disciple of Jesus rather than a Jewish scribe. His reason being that Matthew likes to distinguish the Jewish scribes from the Christian scribes by using the pronoun 'their' as in Mt 7:29,<sup>71</sup> but he does not say 'one of their scribes' here. It means then that probably 'the scribe' is a Christian scribe. Also in v.21 just following this scribe's request, Matthew speaks of 'another of the disciples'. This also signifies his point that the scribe is one of the disciples.<sup>72</sup> (ibid.) Yet, if 'a scribe' in Mt 8:19 is simply 'one of the disciples', Matthew should have said so instead, rather than confusing his readers with the other scribes who are opposing Jesus. Also the using of the phrase 'their scribes' only occur once in Matthew, while in the other occasions when Matthew is for sure mentioning Jewish scribes, he simply says, "Some of the scribes" (Mt 9:3, 12:38, 15:1) without using the third person pronoun to underline the distinction. So Fenton's two points cannot suggest any indication of a Christian scribe.<sup>73</sup> Rather

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71 Mt 7:29 says 'not as their scribes' as the scribes of the Pharisees. He also mentions the use of 'their synagogue' as a further example. e.g. 4:23, 9:35, 10:17, 12:9 etc. See, op.cit. pp.128, 115.

72 ibid.

73 Furthermore, the mentioning of a Christian scribe would by no means fit into the context in the ministry of Jesus. cf. Mt 7:29, 8:19, 9:3.



I would argue in this way: Matthew recalls the address of the scribe to Jesus as 'Teacher' (8:19) which is a form of address found elsewhere in Matthew by several people as in 12:38, by the scribes and the Pharisees; in 19:16 by a rich young man; in 22:16 by the Herodians; in 22:24 by the Sadducees; and in 22:36 by a lawyer, i.e. a scribe, but in no case is the form of address used by the disciples of Jesus. On the other hand, there are some occasions found in Mark the addresses to Jesus as "teacher" from the mouth of the disciples, yet these are in Matthew's gospel, either omitted.<sup>74</sup> or changed to 'Lord' instead.<sup>75</sup> Matthew may regard that the adequate address the disciples make to Jesus should be as 'Lord' not teacher,<sup>76</sup> as the calling of Jesus as 'Lord' signifies a sign of faith and trust in him.<sup>77</sup> This pattern of thought rightly fits in the context of Mt 8:19-22 and explains why the scribe came up to Jesus addressing him as 'Teacher' (v.19) whereas the other disciple addressed him as 'Lord' instead (v.21). If this is true, then the mentioning of the scribe here would then be referring to one of the

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74 e.g. Mk 9:38, 10:35 // Mt 20:20, Mk 13:1 // Mt 24:1 etc.

75 e.g. Mk 4:38 // Mt 8:25, Mk 9:17 // Mt 17:15 etc.

76 e.g. Mt 8:21,25, 14:30, 17:4, 18:21 etc. In fact, he is more than a teacher Mt 7:29.

77 e.g. Mt 8:6,8, 9:28, 15:27, 20:30,33 etc.



Jewish scribes who humbly went up to Jesus to follow him. Thus Matthew is really giving us a distinct portrayal of the theologians in Jesus' time. Despite the irrefutable fact that they are seen as the enemies of Jesus in most cases, yet at least in this one case, we find one of them comes as a follower of Jesus. Furthermore as we have said also that Matthew even honor those scribes who sit on the seat of Moses, telling us to practice and observe their teachings. (Mt 23:2f).

Now we come to the charges Jesus lays on the theologians. They are all in form of discourses Jesus makes about them. This can be found in full in Mt 23, where the famous seven woes to the scribes and the Pharisees are put together. Other passages are Mk 12:38ff // Lk 20:46f and Lk 11:46ff. We may go through the whole passage in Mt 23 and when we go along, we may study the parallel passages as well. Several points can be deduced from the study of Mt 23. Certainly the charges may not be applied to all of the theologians, for there must be some to whom these charges may not apply (e.g. Mt 8:19). But there must have been some like that so as the charges are applicable to them. The charges we can see are:-

- 1) The theologians have shut the kingdom of heaven against men (Mt 23:13) for they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear and



lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves do not move them with their fingers.<sup>78</sup> Since the scribes claim to have the key of knowledge of the law, for this they are honored, but they have taken it away from men. They have even shut the kingdom of heaven against men. (Lk 11:52)

2) Secondly they have turned aside the commandments of God and have reversed their order of importance. This can be seen in Jesus' comments on their teaching. For they say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath' (Mt 23:16). And they say, 'If anyone swear by the altar, it is nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by the oath.' (v.18) But Jesus accuses their blindness, for they have mistaken what is greater and what is more important. For it is not the gold that makes the temple sacred, but the temple that makes the gold sacred (v.17); and it is not the gift makes the altar sacred, but the altar that makes it instead. (v.19) Another story we may recall of some Pharisees and the scribes came from Jerusalem to question Jesus concerning the keeping of their traditions.<sup>79</sup>

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78 Mt 23:4 // Lk 11:46 Luke has specifically mentioned here they are the lawyers and the teachers of Law i.e. the theologians in our usage.

79 Mt 15:1-9 // Mk 7:1-13 Both gives the same setting of their accusing Jesus' disciples of eating with unwashed hands as an introduction to Jesus' charges for their wrongs.



In return, Jesus accuses them for their too much holding fast to the traditions that they have already made void the commandments of God.<sup>80</sup> The so-called tradition of the elders (Mt 15:2 // Mk 7:5) is actually the oral traditions besides the Torah which later put together to form the Mishnah. Jesus states clearly that by the ways they keep those traditions, they have in fact broken the commandments of God. This can be exemplified in their keeping the fifth commandment. For the Lord says, "Honor your father and mother" and "He who speaks evil of father and of mother, let him surely die." But they say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, what you would have gained from me is given to God, he need not honor his father'.<sup>81</sup> But Jesus says, "So, for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God" (Mt 15:6), and "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandments of God in order to keep your tradition."<sup>82</sup> Thus, here we can see the point Jesus was laying charges on the theologians. That,

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80 Mt 15:6 // Mk 7:8 They have different wordings, but stating the same meaning.

81 Mt 15:4f // Mk 7:10f Matthew is putting this before the saying of the prophet Isaiah, but Mark puts it after. It seems Matthew is more concerned with the Law being first then the prophet, thus he reversed the order.

82 Mk 7:9 The two sentences are speaking of the same charge. But the Marcan saying seems to give a stronger feeling that the scribes and the pharisees have been deliberately rejecting the commandments of God in order to keep their traditions. They value their traditions even more than they value the commandment of God.



on the one hand, they claim to have the knowledge of the law and the understanding of the will of God, but on the other hand, they have turned aside the commandments of God. They are in fact laying heavy burdens to men on one side and making void the commandments of God on the other.

3) They have exploited their special knowledge to take advantage from the people. They are by all means to be respected and honored by all simply because they claim to have the knowledge of the Law. And for this they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogue.<sup>83</sup> And they like to have salutations in the market place, and being called rabbi by the people. But on the other hand, they devour the widows' houses, taking advantages of the helpless. Thus Jesus says, "They will receive the greater condemnation." (Mk 12:40 // Lk 20:47)

4) Another distinct charges laid on the theologian is that found in Mt 23:29-36 // Lk 11:47ff. The fact is that they

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83 Mt 23:5ff // Mk 7:28f // Lk 20:46 Besides the fact that Matthew specifically mentioned the kind of phylacteries the scribes wear to the forehead or left arm, (for its characteristics, see discussion in David Hill's Matthew p.310), the other details are almost identical in the three passages. Luke and Mark also specify the reference to the scribes by introducing, "Beware of the scribes who....." Lk 20:46, Mk 12:38.



have been building tombs of the prophets and adorning monuments of the righteous, yet saying, "If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets." Thus, on the one hand, they are rejecting to be like their fathers as murderers of prophets, yet on the other hand, they are themselves following the practices of their fathers.<sup>84</sup> This is the charge on them that though with mouth they honor the prophets and condemn those who killed them, yet they themselves are the sons of the murderers of the prophets and are continuing their practices.

So far, to sum up the charges laid on the theologian, we may say that it is because of their misuse of the key of knowledge that is given to them. For though they have the key of the knowledge of the Law and the understanding of the will of God, they have kept it secret, as their own property, and instead they are laying heavy burden on men, which is hard to bear. Thus in fact by so-doing they are cutting

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84 In semitic languages, to be the son of somebody is to be like him, and by saying 'our fathers', it is accepting the fact that we are their sons and we are following their ways. Thus the Jews by referring their fathers to be their fathers, are saying that they are their sons, of those who murdered the prophets, so Jesus says 'You are witnessing against yourselves'. Mk 23:31 // Lk 11:48. See also Fenton's commentary on St. Matthew p.376.



off the access for men to enter the kingdom of heaven. Also for their privileges of having the secret knowledge, they are by all means held to be highly respected in the society. But they even make this as a means to the exploitation of others, thus devouring the widows' houses, and taking advantages of the helpless. Plus the fact also that though they honor the prophets with their lips, but in actual fact they are living not in accordance with their words. They still keep on persecuting the prophets as their fathers have been doing. Thus, because of all these, Jesus lays heavy and solemn charges against them that "They will receive the greater condemnation." (Lk 20:47 // Mk 12:40)

#### E. The Pious

Before we go into the conflict Jesus has with the pious group, I may recall one other point: that is, about Luke's fondness to picture Jesus in frequent association with the Pharisees. According to Luke, Jesus has constantly had the accompaniment of the Pharisees with him during his ministry<sup>85</sup> and has even several times been invited into the house of the Pharisees.<sup>86</sup> But looking more closely into the context of the gospel, we will find that it is rather Luke's own

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85 e.g. Lk 7:36, 11:37, 14:1, 15:2, 16:14, 17:20, 19:39 etc.

86 e.g. Lk 7:36, 11:37, 14:1f etc.



peculiar way of portraying the Pharisees into the ministry of Jesus. The accompaniment of the Pharisees is seen not as keeping friendship with Jesus, but as the presence of opposition to Jesus throughout his ministry. Thus Luke says, the Pharisees are frequently standing by, watching, questioning and even commenting on the work of Jesus. For instance, they are watching Jesus in his dealing with sinners (Lk 7:36ff), his healing on Sabbath (14:1f) and in his eating with unwashed hands (11:37f). Also, they are criticizing his way of mixing with sinners (15:2), scoffing at his teachings (16:14) and challenging him on the gospel he preaches. (17:20). Even when there are the crowds crying loud for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, singing, "Blessed be the king who comes in the name of the Lord!;...." the Pharisees are there too commenting to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples"<sup>87</sup>. The fact of Jesus' being invited into the house of the Pharisees is also for the same reason. Several times the Pharisees have invited him, but each time they are to watch and to raise questions about the behavior of Jesus among them. For instance, once he was invited into the house of Simon, a

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87 Lk 19:37ff. This passage is peculiar to Luke, so signifying also Luke's special interest in putting the Pharisees into the context.



Pharisee.<sup>88</sup> And while he is sitting at the table, a sinful woman comes and anoints his feet with ointment. This annoys Simon the Pharisee, and he questions in his mind, "If this man (Jesus) were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." (v.39) Thus he raises the question of Jesus' dealing with a sinful woman, and it was to be seen before a Pharisee who has invited Jesus to the house.

Another time when Jesus is invited by a Pharisee to dine in his house, he goes in and sits at table with the Pharisee.<sup>89</sup> And when the Pharisee sees Jesus not washing

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88 Lk 7:36ff, esp. v.40 cf. Mk 14:1-9 // Mt 26:6-13 The story has some points parallel to the stories in Mark and Matthew for the name 'Simon' is mentioned in the three gospels as the host and Jesus being the guest of Simon. Lk 7:37,40; Mk 14:3; Mt 26:6. And also when Jesus was dining, a woman from outside anointed him with an alabaster flask of ointment, as Lk 7:37f; Mk 14:3; Mt 26:7. But certainly the context and the issue in question are different here from Mark and Matthew. The host in the story of Mark and Matthew is Simon the leper but the one in Luke is Simon the Pharisee. They are two different Simons. And in Mark and Matthew, there is an anticipation for the burial of Jesus since it was the time approaching his crucifixion and the issue rests on the waste of the costly ointment. But here in Luke, the picture is totally changed, the emphasis now rests on the sinful nature of the woman that Jesus even accepts the anointing by such a sinful woman. This is the question raised from the story (Lk 7:39). Then Jesus explains his act by telling a parable of the two debtors. vv.41-43. For the structure of this Lucan passage, read also Beare, The Earliest Records of Jesus pp.99f and E.E. Ellis<sup>Luke</sup> pp.123f.

89 Lk 11:37ff. The story proper (v.37f,53) is peculiar to Luke, For this, G.B. Caird has commented that it was



hands before the dinner, he is astonished. Then comes Jesus' comments on the wrongs of the Pharisees that they only care for the cleanliness outside, but inside they are full of extortion and wickedness. (v.39, also v.40ff) It seems quite unlikely that Jesus being a guest in the house would ~~be~~ commenting to the Pharisee who is the host.<sup>90</sup> Especially when we compare the saying of Jesus with the parallels in the other two parallels we may find that they are in different contexts.<sup>91</sup> Thus it may be of Luke's special portrayal that he wants to make it as an introduction for the discourses of Jesus about the Pharisees. Or he is supplementing the incident of the invitation by a Pharisee for dinner (v.37f) with the fragmentary sayings about the Pharisees and the Lawyers (vv.39-43, 46-52)<sup>92</sup>. Still another time, it was on one Sabbath,

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unlikely to be in this context when Jesus being a guest in a Pharisee's house that he lays such charges against them. Caird's St. Luke p.158 cf. also Mk 7:1ff Mt 15:1ff and 23:2ff the similar question raised and the charges Jesus made are in quite different context. Maybe here it is Luke's deliberate intention that he puts forth such a scene as an introduction for Jesus charges on the Pharisees and the scribe.

90 *ibid.*

91 e.g. compare Lk 11:37f // Mk 7:1ff // Mt 15:1f, Lk 11:39-44 // Mt 23:25f, 23, 6f, 27f. and Lk 11:46-52 // Mt 23:4, 29ff, 34ff, 13.

92 The second argument is also suggested by E.E. Ellis. See op.cit. p.168. Yet we do understand from the story that Jesus has been invited by a Pharisee into his house for dinner and there, as Luke tells, raises the question of Jesus' not keeping their tradition of washing hands before the dinner.



Jesus was dining at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees.<sup>93</sup> It was on that occasion that he healed a man of dropsy. Luke draws the scene that Jesus was healing before the Pharisees. The story even seems to tell that the reason why the Pharisees invited him to dine in their house is because they wanted to trap him.<sup>94</sup> They put before him a man of dropsy so that they may watch whether he would heal on Sabbath or not. They were there watching him. (v.1) And when Jesus asked them, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" they were silent. Then Jesus healed the man before them. (v.3f)

The three stories we have mentioned gives the impression that the dinings Jesus has in the houses of the pharisees do often lead to some kind of conflicts between Jesus and the hosts. There may be a question raised on Jesus' not keeping the tradition of washing before dinner, as in the occasion in Lk 11:37f. Or it may be an occasion leading to their criticism on Jesus' dealing with sinners as e.g. his accepting the anointment by a sinful woman in Simon's house, (Lk 7:36ff). Or even it may be as a trap put forward by the Pharisees

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93 Lk 14:1-6 The story is peculiar to Luke that we do not have any parallel in the other gospels.

94 E.E. Ellis has so remarked: That the 'watching' (v.1), the presence of the theologians (v.3) and the sudden appearance of the sick man may indicate that the occasion was staged by the opponents of Jesus. op.cit. p.192.



to see whether Jesus would break the Sabbath law or not, Lk 14:1-6. We have also mentioned that the accompaniment of the Pharisees is only for 'watching', for 'questioning' and for 'criticizing', the works of Jesus. We may then conclude that the association of Jesus with the Pharisees, as portrayed in the gospels, is always for the confrontation of their different views, thus resulting in their mutual criticisms. All the three gospels agree without fail to bring out the conflict Jesus has with this opposition group. Even in Luke, as we have found that though on the outlook he is saying several times of Jesus being invited by the Pharisees for dinner, yet they are in fact intensifying the conflict.

What conflicts does Jesus really have with the Pharisees? From the gospels altogether we have quite a lot of conflict - stories told to exemplify them. Each story is put into some form to illustrate certain points of the conflict. So in order to understand them fully we have to go through all of the stories. We shall study them under these three headings.

- 1) Conflicts about the keeping of Law and Traditions.
- 2) Conflicts on Jesus' mixing friends with sinners.
- 3) Conflicts on the authority of Jesus.



1) Firstly for the conflict - stories about the keeping of the Law and the Traditions, we may find the following typical stories: about Jesus and his disciples eating with defiled hands (Lk 11:37f, Mk 7:1ff // Mt 15:1f); about the disciples breaking the law of Sabbath (Lk 6:1-5 // Mk 2:23-28 // Mt 12:1-8); about Jesus himself breaking the law of Sabbath (Lk 6:6-11 // Mk 3:1-6 // Mt 12:9-14); and about the disciples not observing the tradition of fasting (Lk 5:33-35 // Mk 2:18-20 // Mt 9:14f). We shall now examine them one by one.

For the stories of eating with defiled hands, we have the account from Mark and Matthew which tells of the Pharisees and some of the scribes from Jerusalem coming to accuse Jesus: 'Why do your disciples transgress the traditions of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.'<sup>95</sup> Yet Luke has another story instead. He tells of Jesus himself eating with unwashed hands when he is invited into the house of a Pharisee.<sup>96</sup> So Jesus is here openly breaking the traditions of their elders, even before the eyes of the Pharisees. He then explains by accusing the Pharisees

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95 Mt 15:1f // Mt 7:1-5 Mark has the explanation of the Jewish tradition for the meaning of eating with defiled hands. vv.3f. The story has been mentioned already in the charges Jesus lays on the theologians, so for detail conflicts, please refer to p.139.

96 Lk 11:3f For detailed discussion refer to previous discussion, pp.144f.



that they only cleanse the outside of the cup, but inside they are full of extortion and wickedness.<sup>97</sup> His argument to the question of cleanliness is: What really makes a man clean? And the answer is: it is not the externals that are important, the cup or the dish on which their traditions lay much emphasis (v.39) but rather it is the things inside that are important, i.e. 'The justice and love of God' which the Pharisees neglect (v.42 cf. Mk 7:14ff). As for the keeping of traditions of the elders, Mark and Matthew have given further answers. Jesus is saying that they were too much sticking to their tradition, putting too much effort to hold them fast that as a result they have already made void the commandments of God.<sup>98</sup> Thus the charges Jesus lays here to the Pharisees are (i) They are wrong in giving too much attention on the things external that they have overlooked the things inside which are more important. (ii) They are also wrong in reversing the order of importance by putting the traditions of men even above the commandments of God.

For the story about the disciples breaking the law

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97 Lk 11:39 It seems not directly an answer to why Jesus was eating with unwashed hands. The story in v.37f may be seen only as an introduction for the latter criticism on the Pharisees.

98 Mt 15:6 // Mk 7:8. See also p.139 and notes.



of Sabbath, we have the account in all the three gospels.<sup>99</sup> The story is about the disciples plucking ears of grain from the grain field on one Sabbath. Such action according to their tradition is to be forbidden.<sup>100</sup> So the Pharisees launch their complaints at Jesus, "Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"<sup>101</sup> Jesus replies by quoting the story of David, that 'when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him entered the house of God..... and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat.'<sup>102</sup> So when David was in need and was hungry, he even has broken the law and ate the bread of the Presence. It seems then that the need of men is more valued than the law, the latter should rightly be subordinate to the needs of men. Thus is Jesus saying, "The Sabbath was

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99 Lk 6:1-5 // Mk 2:23-28 // Mt 12:1-8. There are much differences in the three accounts concerning Jesus' answer there. It will be discussed in the latter notes.

100 In normal circumstances, the Law allows the hungry or the poor to pluck the ripe grain to eat, Deut. 23:25 but to do it on the Sabbath is strictly forbidden, for reaping is to be regarded as one of the 39 activities included as work. See also Nineham, St. Mark p.105.

101 Mk 2:24 // Mt 12:2 // Lk 6:2. Luke has 'you' instead of 'they', though he has mentioned that it was 'disciples' who plucked the grain to eat.

102 Mk 2:25f // Lk 6:3f // Mt 12:3f. The story is quoted from I Sam 21. Mark has mistaken Ahimelech, the high priest as "biathar, which Matthew and Luke both omit.



made for man, not man for Sabbath." (Mk 2:27), that the Law was made for the good of man, and because the Law was made for the good of man so the good of man is to be more valued. In this case as the disciples are hungry,<sup>103</sup> then the law while it was basically made for man's good may have to be sacrificed for the furthering of the good of man.<sup>104</sup> Besides this argument from the original purpose of Sabbath, there is also the second point made when it says "So the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath."<sup>105</sup> The statement seems to be giving the second reason for the breaking of the Sabbath Law that it is because of the special character of Jesus, that he himself is the Lord even of the Sabbath.<sup>106</sup> So the second answer is

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103 Mt 12:1 gives the explanation that they are hungry, so they pluck ears of grain to eat.

104 Only Mark has this argument, especially in v.27, and rightly answers the question raised by the Pharisees. Luke and Matthew on the other hand has omitted this, and have kept the second answer as more significant.

105 Mk 2:28 // Lk 6:5 // Mt 12:8. It has been suggested that the term 'the Son of man' is a mistranslation of an Aramaic original meaning simply 'man', that 'man is the Lord of Sabbath..'. But as Nineham argues, if the Aramaic is mistranslated in v.28, why not in v.27. See Nineham St. Mark p.108. Also Cranfield, Mark p.118.

106 'The Son of Man' was a term used with the Messianic significance, that Jesus here was putting forth his messianic status as the answer for the superceding of the Law. But here, it would be very unlikely that Jesus would say it in this way. So it is highly probable that the statement is a latter Christian comment. Read Cranfield, op.cit. p.118. Also for the discussion on the Son of Man, see Nineham op.cit. pp.46f, 90ff, 108.



that it was Jesus' own status as the Lord of Sabbath that justifies the disciples' breaking of the Sabbath. Since Jesus was the Messiah, whose coming signifies the coming of the new kingdom that now the Law of the Old would be superceded.<sup>107,108</sup>

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The discussion whether 'The Son of Man' really means 'Man' or 'I myself' or referring to the Messianic figure remain highly hypothetical. I cannot make any definite decision here. So I simply take this as referring to Jesus himself.

- 107 Nineham suggests that the statement 'the son of man was the Lord of Sabbath' was undoubtedly taken by the Early Church as the basis for their abandonment of the observing Sabbath and instead they had Sunday as 'the Lord's day'. See Nineham, op.cit. p.106.
- 108 Perhaps it is Mark's intention to show that not only v.27 is the answer which would justify the doings of the disciples, but also v.28 that it was Jesus' own status which justifies the case. Luke and Matthew on the other hand omit Mk 2:27 and keeps v.28 as the single answer which by itself is already sufficient to refute the question. (Lk 6:10 // Mk 12:8) The focus thus seemed not arguing from the original purpose of the Sabbath, but rather on the significant character of Jesus as the Lord of Sabbath. Matthew even adds to the story of David another example that the priest in the temple does profane the Sabbath Law. For the temple law demands the priests to change bread in the temple (Lev 24:8), which would itself be a violation of the Sabbath Law. Matthew is trying to demonstrate that the temple Law was taken precedence over the Law of Sabbath and he further says, 'I tell you, something greater than the temple is here' (12:6) So he is comparing further the Sabbath law with the temple law and also the temple with Jesus. That Jesus was even greater than the temple. Thus, as the law of Sabbath has to give way for the temple law, it would certainly be so for the coming of Jesus. So no doubt the Sabbath Law was to be superceded. Thus, the second argument is developed to a full extent here. Read also Fenton, St. Matthew pp.188f.



If we take the point of the second argument, then the charge laid on the Pharisees is that they fail to discern that Jesus as the Lord even of the Sabbath so that they have launched wrong comments on Jesus and his disciple. We will discuss this point later as we go along. For the story about Jesus himself breaking the Sabbath, it is the account of his healing on the Sabbath. We have two stories typically illustrating this point. They are the story of healing of a man with a withered hand. (Lk 6:6-11 // Mk 3:1-6 // Mt 12:9-14) and the story of healing a man of dropsy (Lk 14:1-6). The second story is very much similiar to the first one and it has been already mentioned before (pp.42f) so we will concentrate on the first story now. The story tells of Jesus teaching on one Sabbath in the synagogue and there comes a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees are there to see whether he would heal the man or not.<sup>109</sup> Yet Jesus does heal the man, showing them that 'it is lawful to do good on Sabbath.'<sup>110</sup> Jesus' argument takes the form of

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109 Lk 6:7 pictures the scribes and the Pharisees there watching Jesus to find accusation against him, whereas Mark and Matthew only have 'they' Mt 12:10 // Mk 3:2, probably implying the Pharisees too.

110 Mark and Luke picture Jesus' taking the action himself to heal the man, while Matthew has the people put forth the question to Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" Mt 12:10, then comes Jesus' argument and the action of healing at the end. (v.13) But Mark and Luke puts the argument at the end.



a question, saying, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?"<sup>111</sup> By this question the people are silenced and they would not find any fault on him. The story ends with the reaction of the Pharisees who take counsel together to seek to destroy him.<sup>112</sup> That on the one hand, the Pharisee could not find any fault on Jesus, for what he was doing was blameless before them, yet on the other hand, they could not stand what he was doing. This is the picture of the story as the three gospel portrays. The last conflict about the keeping of tradition is the accusation on his disciples' not fasting. The story (Lk 5:33-35 // Mk 2:18-20 // Mt 9:14f) tells of the people asking Jesus, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" (Mk 2:18)<sup>113</sup>

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111 Lk 6:9 // Mk 3:4. In Matthew, it becomes a simple statement, "So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath, Mt 12:12. He adds also an illustration that we even would save a sheep out of the pit on the Sabbath and 'Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!'

112 Lk 6:11 // Mk 3:6 // Mt 12:14. Luke intensifies the picture to say that 'they were filled with fury' and Mark also says 'they held counsel with the Herodians.' (3:6) The association of the Pharisees with the Herodian can hardly be seen, except at the deepest hatred. Thus it is another way of saying that the Pharisee was very much indignant.

113 Mark and Luke do not specify who were the people asking the question, but Matthew says they were the disciples of John, but the question raised is on the conflict too of fasting.



The answer Jesus gives is: "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"<sup>114</sup> Thus it is saying that in time of joy and gladness, they have no need to fast or mourn. Jesus here speaks of the time of wedding, and is associating himself as the bridegroom so that when he is still with the disciples, they should not be mournful.<sup>115</sup> Thus Jesus is saying that his coming and his bringing about the good news of the kingdom of God is for joy and gladness as a celebration of a wedding feast. This they did not understand, so the people's questioned : Why do your disciples not fast? This incident also gives the picture that it is out of misunderstanding of the character and the significance of the presence of Jesus that the people have such question raised to him. So far we have gone through the stories about the question on keeping of the Law and the traditions. And we find in some occasions Jesus rebukes the people's wrong weighting of the tradition, and their shallow understanding of the Law given to them, yet in some other occasion, we also

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114 Mk 2:19a // Lk 5:34 // Mt 9:15a Mark has also the saying "As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast" (19b) An explanation to 19a which does not add anything to it, thus both Matthew and Luke omit it.

115 See Cranfield's Mark pp.109ff he has rightly argued that v.19a and b and v.20 cannot be taken apart, that v.19a itself gives hints for v.19b and v.20 too. And the whole thing has to be taken allegorically. Thus he agrees that Jesus was thinking himself as the bridegroom too.



find that the conflict arises mainly out of their misunderstanding of the unique character of Jesus. That he is the Lord even of the Sabbath, that he has the authority even to supercede the Sabbath law, and also that he is the bridegroom, his presence does have a special significance as the presence of the bridegroom to the wedding feast.

2) Secondly, for the conflict stories about Jesus' making friends with sinners, we have found Jesus being criticized by the Pharisees as 'a friend of sinners and tax-collector's (Lk 7:34 // Mt 11:19) a notorious name used by the pious as a term of despising. Jesus himself recalls it: "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' And the Son of man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!'" (Lk 7:34 // Mt 11:19). For when John lived among them as an ascetic, they called him a demoniac: yet when Jesus was no ascetic, they called him 'a glutton and a drunkard'. This reminds us of the incidence when Jesus' disciples were criticized for not observing fasts;<sup>116</sup> the phrase 'a friend of tax-collectors and sinners' also reminds us of the occasion when he had openly sat at table with them.<sup>117</sup> We have already come across a

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116 Lk 5:33-35 // Mk 2:18-20 // Mt 9:14f. See above p.154.

117 Lk 5:29 // Mk 2:15 // Mt 9:10 also Lk 15:1f. See also ch.3 pp.79ff.



story about Jesus' argument with them on cleanliness,<sup>118</sup> that Jesus rebuked their view as too much emphasis on outward cleanliness, yet neglecting what is more important, for inside they are full of extortion and rapacity. Matthew also reminds us with the words: "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'.....", when Jesus was answering to this question of eating with sinners (Mt 9:13). That is, the Lord desires mercy, and 'eating with sinners' is an act of mercy to them.<sup>119</sup> The second point here we may deduce is: that Jesus was refuting their way of observing the law. For they have put their observance at their own service, as an act of justifying themselves to be righteous. But they are at the same time keeping it at the expense of others. So Jesus reminds them that the demands of God is to do justice and love and have mercy on others. Here Jesus has taken up the prophetic understanding of the Law and commandment of God as to love and to do justice.<sup>120</sup> He points to them that the Law directs us for the good of others rather than for

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118 Lk 11:39ff // Mt 23:23ff. See pp.144f.

119 'Sacrifice' is not to be condemned unless in so far as it creates distinctions between the righteous and sinners. For 'Mercy' the Hebrew word 'רַחֲמִים' hints to the meaning of 'love' as to be vastly more important. See also David Hill, Matthew p.175.

120 cf. Hosea 6:6, Amos 5:4,14, Micah 6:18 etc.



one's own assertion. Thus his simply answer is: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick ..... For I come not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mk 2:17 // Lk 5:31f // Mt 9:12f). He is here telling us also that he has the mission to come to the sinners, as it is out of the demand of God to love and have mercy on others. So this is the reason for his having association with the sinners.<sup>121</sup> And contrasting with the Pharisees, his mission to the sinner would effectually refute their attitude for exclusion of the sinners as being acceptable to God. Thus it may reflect the charges Jesus would lay on the pious that on the one hand their too much emphasis on the outward keeping of the Law in its greatest details has made nought what is more important in the demands of God, i.e. to do justice and have mercy. And on the other hand, their attitude of piety has transformed into a way serving their own needs and ambitions rather than for others. This is in turn contradicting to the justice and the love of God.

3) The last group of conflict stories we now come to is those about the legitimate authority of Jesus. We shall examine

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121 See also Cranfield Mark p.106 "Jesus is not at the moment concerned either to affirm that some people are relatively righteous or to deny that any are so righteous as not to need to repent; he is simply concerned to defend his right to associate with the disreputable."



two stories, the one is on his authority to forgive sins. (Lk 5:17-26 // Mk 2:1-12 // Mt 9:1-8) the other is on his power to heal and to cast out demons. (Mt 9:32-34 // 12:22-45 // Lk 11:14f // Mk 3:22-27). Actually the power of Jesus is shown in many many occasions as in his teaching (Mk 1:22 // Mt 7:29), in his power over demons (e.g. Mt 8:1-7, 28-34), in his calling of disciples (Mk 1:16-20 // Mt 4:18-22), in his stilling of storm (e.g. Mt 8:23-27 // Mk 4:35-41) and others. But the two stories would themselves rightly reflect the conflict Jesus was having with the Pharisees. The story which leads to the question of Jesus' authority to forgive sins is the story of healing of a paralytic.<sup>122</sup> The Pharisees were murmuring when Jesus was saying 'Your sins are forgiven', for they thought he was speaking blasphemies against God. (Lk 5:21 // Mk 2:7 // Mt 9:3) 'The idea of God's forgiveness', as David Hill has remarked, 'found frequent expression in orthodox and sectarian Judaism of the time, but never was it actualised and personally communicated, as in this narrative.'<sup>123</sup> Yet Jesus was the first one to actualize it by proclaiming to the paralytic "Son, your sins are forgiven". Such was too radical a proclamation for the Pharisees and the scribes to

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122 See also ch.3 pp.67f,76f esp. on the differences among the three gospels.

123 See Hill, Matthew p.171.



accept, so they thought Jesus was speaking blasphemies. But Jesus by healing the paralytic demonstrated his legitimate authority that, "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins."<sup>124</sup> Yet this special character of Jesus, they failed to discern, hence they could not understand the doings of Jesus, such as when he was demonstrating his power through his healing ministry. This leads us to the second story where the Pharisees are coming to criticize his power of healing and casting out demons.<sup>125</sup> While the people were amazed at the healings of Jesus, the Pharisees comment that, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons."<sup>126</sup> They either fail to discern or they refuse to accept the significance of the healings that they prefer to say such comment. Jesus then even reaffirms to them that it is by the power of God that he casts out demons. This in turn, signifies that the kingdom of God has come already. Thus he says, "But if it is by the Spirit

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124 Lk 5:24 // Mk 2:10 // Mt 9:6. The healing by itself was a proof for his power.

125 Mt 9:34 // Mk 3:22 Matthew has also another parallel instance in Mt 12:24, referring to as the comments of the Pharisees, whereas Mark intensifies the picture by saying they were the scribes who came down from Jerusalem to pass judgement on Jesus' deeds.

126 Mt 12:23f Matthew pictures also the comments of the people, "Can this be the Son of David?" (v.23) as contrasting to the comments of the Pharisees. The crowd could recognise the significance of the healings of Jesus, the Pharisees fail to discern.



of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."<sup>127</sup> The point here witness to the inability or the unwillingness of the Pharisees to fully recognise the power of Jesus and his authority as from God, and the person Jesus as uniquely the 'son of David' or simply 'the Messiah'. Actually it is the point that all the three gospels agree without fail that the Pharisees and the scribes have rejected Jesus, or the fact that they could not understand his ministry, simply because they could not recognise him as the Messiah.

To study all the conflict stories as a whole, we may find again the picture more vividly. Mk 2:1-3:6 is a section typically put together to draw for us this picture of Jesus' meeting conflicts with the Pharisees.<sup>128</sup> It consists of five stories all of which we have gone through before. But reading the five stories together, we may see the deeper meaning in the reason why they are put together. The first of the five stories is the healing of a paralytic (Mk 2:1-12), which as we have seen, witnesses to the point that "The son of man has

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127 Mt 12:28 // Lk 11:20 has 'by the finger of God'. But interestingly, Matthew, while seldom using the term 'kingdom of God' has 'Kingdom of heaven' instead, yet here in this incident, he bravely uses the term. Other incidents he uses the term in 19:24, 21:31, 43 with emphatic meanings. Here he may be contrasting it with 'the kingdom of Satan'. Read also Fenton St. Matthew p.198.

128 See also Nineham St. Mark p.88f.



the authority on earth to forgive sins."<sup>129</sup> And the point for the Pharisee's and the scribes criticism is simply because they cannot apprehend the special status of Jesus as the one bearing such authority to forgive sins.<sup>130</sup> The second story is about the criticism of Jesus eating with sinners (Mk 2:15-17). The conflict here between Jesus and the Pharisees rests also on the point that the opposition group do not recognise the mission of Jesus, that he comes not to call the righteous, but sinners. (v.17) The third story is the accusation on Jesus' disciples being not keep the fasts. (Mk 2:18-20). Here the point put forth also rests the unique character of Jesus, the presence of whom gives joy and gladness and the disciples need not mourn. So is the saying, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast." (v.19) Jesus is thus portrayed as the bridegroom, so when he is with the disciples, they need not fast. It is this unique character of Jesus that the opposition group fail to apprehend. The fourth story is about the disciples' plucking ears of grain to eat on the Sabbath, thus violating the Sabbath law.

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129 v.10 Reading together with Luke's and Matthew's account we can see this point is much emphasied and more shifted to. See also ch.3 pp.67f.

130 Matthew even points also to the Early Church who has such authority Mt 9:8. See also ch.3 p.68n.



Mark has two arguments here. The first argument recalls the story of David to argue from the original purpose of Sabbath, saying, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath' (v.27). The second argument says: 'The son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath. (v.28) It witnesses to the point that besides the first argument accountable for the case, there is another significant factor also - that Jesus himself is the Lord even of the Sabbath.<sup>131</sup> Thus, it is saying that the Pharisees have wrongly laid criticism on Jesus, because they have failed to apprehend rightly the special status of Jesus that 'he is the Lord even of the Sabbath.' The last story of the five is about Jesus' healing of a man with a withered hand on Sabbath day (Mk 3:1-6). The story is only a concluding story to build up to the climax that the Pharisee were silenced (v.4) and they went out and held counsel with the Herodians, seeking, how to destroy him. The previous story is about the disciples' breaking the Sabbath Law, but now here the Pharisees are watching to see whether Jesus himself would break it too. And at this time, Jesus not only heals the man before their eyes but he also looks around at them with anger, grieves at their hardness of heart (v.5) and so the opposition people were filled with fury and sought to

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<sup>131</sup> We have mentioned already that Luke and Matthew support the second argument. See pp.154f and notes.



destroy him.

The five stories in Mk 2:1-3:6 point clearly to the issues behind the conflicts between Jesus and the people. The opposition grows gradually, for in the first incident, the opposition group questioned in their heart only of the behavior of Jesus (2:6) then they began to ask questions, but first to the disciples (2:16), then they directly approached Jesus (2:24), and again first about the wrongs of his disciples (2:24) then they watched for the wrong of Jesus that they might accuse him directly (3:2). At last, they decided to destroy him (3:6). Thus the opposition built up to the climax, that at last they wanted to kill him. But what is wrong with Jesus? As the stories tell, Jesus has done no wrong. The point only lies on the fact of the failure on the part of the opposition group that they could not identify the character of Jesus, his special status as 'the Messiah from God.' Thus to conclude, we may sum up with Nineham's words: "We have seen that throughout these conflicts their opposition (of the Pharisees and scribes) rested on a fundamental misunderstanding - an inability, or refusal to see that Jesus was God's eschatological agent and that his sovereign freedom with regard to law and custom sprang from that fact."<sup>132</sup> We should make a note here also that the three gospels though varying much in their accounts

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<sup>132</sup> Nineham's op.cit. p.110.



of the conflict stories, yet all agree in portraying this unique character of Jesus and altogether they agree to say that the conflicts he has with the religious leaders are based on the mere fact that the opposition group has failed to accept Jesus as the Messiah. This point is even more manifested in the later trial of Jesus by their authorities.<sup>133</sup> That, the authorities could not find any fault in him, they have put forward false witnesses against him, but they did not agree.<sup>134</sup> The three gospels identically agree to say that the only reason for their putting Jesus to death rests on his acknowledging himself as the Messiah.<sup>135</sup> This the authorities could not accept so they say he was saying blasphemy and deserves death.<sup>136</sup> They then hand him over to

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133 We have already mentioned of Jesus' conflict with the authorities that though the three gospels present them differently, yet they are saying the same, that the authorities are not accepting this unique character of Jesus. See esp. pp.117ff.

134 Mk 14:55-64 // Mt 26:59-66 esp. in Mark, he says twice 'their witnesses did not agree' v.56, 59.

135 Mk 14:61f // Mt 26:63f // Lk 22:70f. Though they have somewhat different wordings. They all have the question as 'Are you the Christ, the son of God?' And according to Mark, Jesus answered ('I am', Matthew puts 'You have said so,': Luke says also, "You say that I am". Anyway Jesus is affirming his unique character. And it is for this that he was put to death.

136 Mk 14:64, Mt 26:65f and Mark says, 'They all condemned him as deserving death.'



Pilate for his final death.<sup>137</sup> So, the crucial point lies on Jesus' being the Messiah which the religious leaders and the authorities refused to accept.

The point of the unique character of Jesus as the Messiah cannot be neglected. It is rather this unique character that determines, the way he teaches and acts and even his relationships with other people. At least this is what underlies the minds of the gospel writers in their portraying the life of Jesus. So in our studying of Jesus' conflicts with the authorities and religious group, we have to bear in mind this unique character. It is from this also that we can establish the unique attitude of him as deliberately portrayed by the gospel writers.

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137 Though the accusation they put forth before Pilate is a bit different here; it is rather on the political issue that he says he is the king of the Jews, yet three gospel accounts tells also that they could not find fatal faults against him, but it is the authorities who want Jesus to death, plus the same reason that he acknowledges himself to be the Messiah. Read Mk 15:2-15 // Mt 27:11-26 // Lk 23:2-5, 18-25. Although many have argued that Pilate would have played a significant role in putting Jesus to death, in fact, it would not be as simple a case as told by the synoptic writers. For this, see Paul Winter's On the Trial of Jesus. (1961) Nevertheless, it is the picture that the gospel writers intend to portray, by minimizing the part played by Pilate that the fault may be laid more squarely on the authorities. And indeed we cannot overlook the essential work they have done for the death of Jesus'.



For these conflict-stories concerning Jesus and the Pharisees, we may sum up our discussion thus far in the following points:-

- (i) Concerning the conflict about the keeping of the Law and Traditions, Jesus disagreed with them on their paying too much attention on outward keeping of the Law, but neglecting what is more important, the commandments of God as to do justice and to love. Thus they are hypocrites.
- (ii) Concerning the conflicts about Jesus mixing friends with sinners, Jesus rebuked their attitude of piety which has put them into a position to strive for their own ambitions and at the same time at the expense of the others. Thus they have rejected the sinners by their standard of piety. But this in turn is contradicting the demands of God, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."
- (iii) Concerning the conflicts on the authorities of Jesus, the stories all converge to a point that the opposition group has failed to understand the unique status of Jesus, they fail to apprehend or they refuse to accept that he was 'the one who comes from God', 'He was the Messiah.'

These are the three crucial points that we have found after we have gone through all the conflict-stories. And now we



may come to the point to see the charges Jesus lays on that group of people. The charges laid against these pious ones are kept in the discourses of Jesus in some way parallel also to those he lays against the theologians. For the pious ones they are in fact practising the teachings of their theologians. They also love honor and praises from man. And the same charges have been laid to the scribes and to the Pharisees as well, and Jesus says, "Woe to you Pharisees! for you love the best seat in the synagogues and salutations in the market places."<sup>138</sup> And for the men of practice, Jesus adds also some specific charges, accusing that they have been too conscientious on tiny and trifling things so that they have overlooked what is more important. So Jesus says, "Woe to you Pharisees! for you tithe mint and rue and every herb and neglect justice and the love of God; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."<sup>139</sup> He also stresses on the fact that 'justice and love of God are the weightier matters of the law' but which the scribes

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138 Lk 11:43, cf. 20:46 The same remark has been laid to the scribes as well. (see pp.37f) and thus in Lk 11:43,45, as when Jesus was laying charges on the Pharisees, the scribes said that he was laying to them too: "Teacher, in saying this, you have reproached us also." (v.45)

139 Lk 11:42 // Mt 23:23. Matthew has it both 'the scribes and the pharisees' and adds to say they are 'hypocrites'.



and Pharisees have been neglecting, thus 'You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel.' (Mt 23:24) This is the same criticism as of the theologians turning aside the commandments of God, their mistaking what is more important and what is lesser.<sup>140</sup> Or to say it with a word, it is the hypocrisy of the pious that Jesus lays heavy charges on - the hypocrisy of making clean outside, while remaining unclean inside, and the hypocrisy of keeping the tiny regulations of the Law, while neglecting the more weightier matter of the law. And constantly in the gospels, we can find the term 'hypocrites' applied to this group of people. That Jesus has once said, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" (Mt 16:6 // Mk 8:15). To this, he then explains that the leaven is not the 'the leaven of the bread' but 'the teaching of the Pharisees.' (Mt 16:12), Luke further states clearly that 'the leaven of the Pharisees' is in one word - hypocrisy (Lk 12:1).<sup>141</sup> Jesus has stated

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140 cf. Mt 23:16-22. For this part, the charges laid against the pious may seem to duplicate those of the scribes. It is highly probable that Jesus was laying such charges to both groups for the same wrongs they had done.

141 David Hill has remarked: "the Greek word *hypocrites* means 'actor' and Matthew is using this term for those who consciously play at being pious, e.g. 15:7, 22:18, and (may be) more particularly of those who are actually unaware of their religious vanity and 'play-acting' among whom at least some of the pharisees could rightly be numbered." See Matthew p.133. G.B. Caird has also made a parallel



clearly when he quotes the words of Isaiah, saying, 'the people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.'<sup>142</sup> Besides laying charges on the hypocrisy of the pious one, we may also find the charges pointing to self-righteous actions. Jesus indeed rejects their way of piety for two reasons: firstly their attitude has made them think of themselves as good, i.e. self-assured by their good works, and secondly by this, they have naturally rejected those whom they call sinners and consequently despised them. Two parables that Jesus teaches can illustrate these points vividly. The one is the parable Jesus tells of two men, a Pharisee and a Tax-collector, praying in the temple (Lk 18:10-14). The parable is told specially to contrast the two prayers. First is the Pharisee, standing upright and praying with himself, saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. I fast twice a week, I

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definition for the term 'hypocrisy' when he says, 'The hypocrite is the one who, consciously or unconsciously, has sacrificed truth to outward appearance. St. Luke p.160.

- 142 Mt 15:8-9 // Mk 7:6-7, as quoted from Is 29:13. The quotation in Matthew and Mark accords significantly with LXX, esp. the second part of the verse: 'In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men' which differs much from the Hebrew Text. cf. Is 29:13 in RSV. The difference has been due to the corruption of the Hebrew Text and the resultant solution by the LXX writers. For details, see also R.H. Gundry, Use of OT in Matthew p.14ff.



give tithes of all that I get." (v.11f). His prayer reflects much of this kind of self-righteous and self-assertive mind.<sup>143</sup> But the tax-collector, because his mind is on God, knows himself to be sinner. So he stands far off, not even daring to lift up his eyes to heaven, but beats his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." (v.13) Of the two men, it is not the pious Pharisee who finds the good pleasure of God, but the sinful tax-collector; he finds himself justified by the grace and mercy of God. (cf. v.14) In the prayer of the Pharisee, we find too that he is not only self-assertive, praying with himself, boasting of himself before God, but he is also despising the one who is praying aside him, thus he says: "I am..... not like this tax-collector" (v.11). How natural it is spoken out of the lips of the pious Pharisee, that he may even not be conscious of the fact that he is despising others. But it is so natural that he even is not aware of it. The other parable which gives a similar picture

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143 Caird has rightly commented that the Pharisee was in fact not really interested in God, but only in himself. Count the number of 'I' he uses. See Caird, *op.cit.* p.202. The prayer may be a bit dramatized, but it is not rare, we can find parallels also in the Jewish Talmud e.g. Berakoth 286 'I give thanks to thee, O Lord my God, that thou hast set my portion with those who sit in the house of instruction, and thou hast not set my portion with those who sit in street corners, for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for words of Torah and they rise for frivolous talk; I labor and they labor, but I labor and receive a reward and they labor and do not receive a reward; I run and they run, but I run to the life of the world to come and they run to the pit of destruction.' *ibid.*



is the famous parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32). So often we are concerned with the character of the prodigal son and the gracious father that we have overlooked the mind of the elder son there. And actually the telling of the parable sets much stress in describing the attitude of this elder son, for he is the figure put to reflect the attitudes of those pious people. Jesus has told the parable for the reason of their murmuring at his eating with sinners.<sup>144</sup> What does the elder son do when the Prodigal son returns and is accepted by the father? "He was angry and refused to go in (to the house), when his father comes out and entreats him, he said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never give me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!'" (vv.28ff). The elder son may indeed be good enough to deserve everything from his father, yet his rightful claim shows on the other hand his inability to accept his younger brother. He envies the father's loving kindness to this younger brother because he is accepted by the father on the basis of his mere repentance.

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144 Lk 15:1f esp. the picture of the elder son in vv.25ff.



This reflects also the attitude of those pious ones whose minds have been set for piety through works that they are unlikely or incapable to see God's forgiveness of those sinners merely because of their repentance. This self-assertive attitude on the other hand leads to rejection of others. It is indeed rightly the comment to those pious that, "Because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go." (Mt 23:13 // Lk 11:52). Jesus' charges on them is very harsh, for he says to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts, for what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Lk 16:15). When Jesus says to the rich, "He who lays up treasures for himself, is not rich toward God." (Lk 12:21), he is indeed saying also to the pious who think themselves as spiritually rich.<sup>145</sup> And again in the Sermon on the Mount, the teachings of Jesus there are pointing to cut off any of

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145 The Rich fool is striving for good for himself, for the good of his soul, Lk 12:19; similarly, the pious ones are also striving for their own souls. The word probably refers one whole life, whether the soul or the spirit. But Jesus teaches: Do not be anxious about your life. (v.21 ψυχή used again.) Thus the teaching is also applicable to the pious that they should not be too anxious about their own salvation, and not trust in their works but in the graciousness of God.



this kind of self-righteous attitude. For he says, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:20). He has then laid down superior righteousness that few of us can meet.<sup>146</sup> But the new righteousness he lays which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees is both simpler and more demanding. It is more demanding, for it is not the killing of others that is liable to judgement, but the anger towards others and the insults to others shall be liable too. (v.21f) It is not only the actual adultery that is to be condemned, but the lustful look at woman is included too (v.27f). But it is also more simpler too, for the new righteousness can be reducible to 'Love'. Especially the saying: 'Do not resist the one who is evil' (v.39) and 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.' (v.44). The commandments can be concluded by one word, 'Love' - to return love to those haters and those enemies (vv.39ff) and even to those who

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146 Mt 5:21ff. Fenton has remarked that it was not Jesus' concern to replace one set of laws by another set which is more difficult to keep. But His 'law' intends to make one entirely dependent on the mercy of God, because by it one is put permanently into the position of a sinner who must always say 'Forgive our debts.' cf. Mt 6:12. See Fenton op.cit. p.95.



deserves no love (vv.46f)<sup>147</sup>. From the eight Beatitudes, we can see that those who are blessed are not the rich, the wealthy, the honorable and the privileged, but 'Blessed are the poor in spirit..... those who mourn..... the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,..... those who are merciful,..... the pure in heart, the peace-makers..... and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.<sup>148</sup> Luke even sets four parallels of those who are blessed and those who will experience woe, saying 'Blessed are, you poor..... you that hunger..... you that weep..... you that men hates.' as parallel to, 'Woe to you that are rich..... you that are full,..... you that laugh..... you that all men speak well of' (Lk 6:20-24). Here is put forward blessedness to those

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147 cf. Hosea 6:6 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice' as quoted twice in Mt 9:13, 12:7, and Lk 6:36 'Be merciful, even as your father is merciful'. Also Romans 13:9f 'The Commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law'. cf. Mt 5:17 too.

148 Mt 5:3-10 cf. Lk 6:20-24, whereas Luke says, 'Blessed are you poor..... you that hunger,..... you that weep..... you that men hates' Luke has a more physical and social sense in his context, but Matthew seems spiritualized them into Christian virtues. Probably Luke was having in mind of Christians who are suffering poverty, hunger and persecution because of their being Christians, they are in deep distress and needed to be comforted. Read also Jeremias' comment on the differences of using 'poor' in Luke and 'poor in spirit' in Matthew; thus seeing the differences of the two traditions. See Jeremias' Theology Vol.I pp.112f.



who are in need, while saying woe to those who are enough. Those who are rich, who are full, who laugh, and whom all men speak well of are rightly describing what we have been saying of the pious, the self-assured and the self-righteous. But here Jesus is laying serious charges to them, saying woes to them. Thus he is putting forth a complete reversal of the value of the pious. What he requires is an attitude of poverty<sup>149</sup> and an attitude of discontent.<sup>150</sup> And this is what is needed in the hearts of the pious.

To sum up this section on the charges Jesus lays on the pious, we have found his charges on their way of looking at their traditions that they are too much concerned with the outward keeping of them which consequently leads to their neglect of the commandments of God. That for the sake of their traditions they have made void the word of God. (Mt 15:6) It is the teachings of the pharisees that Jesus criticizes as hypocrisy. Also we have found the charges on their attitude to piety, which on the one hand leads to their self-assertive attitude, boasting of their own works, and on the other leads to their rejection of others who cannot reach their standards. Jesus refutes their boasting

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149 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' Mt 5:3.

150 Like the prayer of the tax-collector: 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' Lk 18:13.



attitude by saying that, "What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God." (Lk 16:15) and by quoting the prophetic words, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice"<sup>151</sup>.

#### F. Summary

So far we have seen in this chapter concerning Jesus' attitude towards 'the rich'. The charges he lays on them does not come out simply of the fact that they are rich. But rather in every case, we have noticed that it is in the way they have handled their riches. To the wealthy, Jesus comments on their being too much obsessed by the earthly goods; for they have valued them even more worthy than life in the kingdom of God. As in the case of the rich young ruler, their attitude is seen in their not wanting to share their possession with others. And they would rather keep their riches than follow the demand of Jesus (e.g. Lk 18:18ff). To the authorities, he comments on their wrong use of the privileges which God has given them, the charge is dramatized in the incidence of his cleansing of the Temple. That he say, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nation, but you make it a den of robbers." (Mk 11:17) To the theologians also, he comments on the same point that they have been wrongly using their special gifts of the knowledge of the

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<sup>151</sup> Hosea 6:6 cf. Mt 9:12, 12:7.



Law. They have kept them at their own service. So Jesus says, "Woe to you lawyers(theologians), for you have taken away the key of knowledge, you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering." (Lk 11:52). And to the pious, Jesus comments on their wrong attitude towards piety. That on the one hand, they have the privileges and gifts for thier keeping the Torah strictly, but they have been making them as a means for self-boasting and as a criterion for despising others. So they are also using wrongly of what God has given to them. To say in a word, it is not 'the riches' they have that deserves the charges, but their way of handling that Jesus lays serious charges to. And it may well to conclude Jesus' judgement with the saying in the parable of the vineyard, it is: "That he (the Lord) will put those wretches (the riches) to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons." (Mt 21:41).



Chapter V    A FINAL WORDA.   Summary of Chapter III - IV 183

- Jesus' attitude to man - he accepts all
- His special mission to 'the Poor': based on the Lord's special care and concern for them
- His rebuking of those who are too much anxious about their lives: both 'the Poor' and 'the Rich'
- The good news he brings to man
- His charges on 'the Rich'
- One further remark: The way he actualizes the will of God

B.   Relevance to Our Churches Today 193

- Beware of going extremes in preaching the good news
- Mission to 'the Poor'
- Mission to 'the Rich'



#### A. Summary of Chapter III - IV

From what we have studied, we can see the significant fact that even though the three gospels may differ much in various ways, they are altogether portraying Jesus in a quite unique way. Here are the findings we have in regard to Jesus' attitude to man as portrayed by the three gospels.

1. From his attitude to both 'the Poor' and 'the Rich', we understand that in actual fact he accepts all, regardless of their status as privileged or under-privileged. He does not reject 'the Poor' because they are poor. It was the common view in his days that those sinners, the sick and the blind, the lepers, the tax-collectors, Gentiles and Samaritans and many people so labelled were to be despised and were even rejected by the religious leaders, yet Jesus accepts them, and he even lives among them as a friend of them. He preaches the good news of the Kingdom of God to them inviting them into the kingdom by sharing table fellowship with them. To 'the Rich' also, Jesus does not reject them simply because they are rich. Even though we have found so many charges he lays against them, yet we do find he has friends from this group. He has open friendship with Zacchaeus who is a rich tax-collector, and with Joseph of Arimathea, who is both a rich man and a respectable member of the Sanhedrin. For the religious group, Matthew also tells once of a scribe who



comes up to Jesus and asks to follow him.<sup>1</sup> Thus he does not reject 'the Rich' either.

<sup>2</sup>  
B. All the three gospels together picture the mission of Jesus as bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. They all have the saying concerning Jesus' specific mission i.e. 'I come not to call the righteous, but sinners' (Mt 9:13 // Mk 2:17 // Lk 5:32). The statement focuses not on the point of who are the righteous, nor does Jesus really mean to exclude the righteous in his mission, but rather the point of argument is to justify the mission of Jesus to the sinners. It tells clearly that Jesus has a special concern for the sinners. This is true to his ministry too, that he not only cares for the sinners, but also for the poor, and those who are needy, whether they be physically, socially, religiously or spiritually so. His mission to the poor is based on the Old Testament's understanding of the Lord's special care and concern for the poor, that the Lord has promised to help and look after and protect them for the mere fact that they are helpless. There is not anything on the part of the poor to deserve such care, but it is only out of the lovingkindness

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1 Mt 8:19f. For other evidence, we may quote also the stories about Nicodemus whom John tells us is a Pharisees, Jn 3:1-8, 7:50, 19:39.



and mercy of the Lord that he has promised to save them. It is against this background that Jesus preaches the good news of the kingdom to them. And such are the ways he shows his concern and care to the poor - that he heals their sickness, forgives their sins, mixing with them as friends, and inviting them into the kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

3. From his dealings with both 'the Poor' and 'the Rich', we also know of his rebuking those who are too much anxious about their lives, whether they be 'the Poor' or 'the Rich'. For both of them would probably fall into the peril of being anxious about their lives. For the poor, they are anxious of what to eat and what to put on, but Jesus rebukes them that there is no need to be anxious, since it is both pointless and absurd, showing others that they do not have faith in God. Rather Jesus turns their attention to rest their lives to God, learn to live as the children of Him. That is, to have simple faith in God's divine providence. Furthermore, He turns also their attention to doing the will of God, to loving others as God loves them. In other words, it is to live a life fully as a child of God ought to live. To 'the Rich', esp. those wealthy people who are anxious for storing up riches for their lives,

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2 For the significance of his action, we may refer back to the discussions in ch.3.



Jesus refutes their way of thinking. The Parable of the Rich Fool tells of the pointlessness of their way of thinking. Rather Jesus turns their attention to the obedience to the will of God. The demand 'to sell what you have and give them to the poor' is a demand to avoid covetousness, plus the other factor that it is unjust to keep the riches for oneself while there are people, poor and in need and yet no one gives a hand to help. It is by no means the will of God to allow such scene to exist. So as the children of God, we are to love others as we love ourselves, and we are to keep the commandment of God, namely to do justice and have mercy.

4. The good news Jesus brings to men is the proclamation of the lovingkindness and the mercy of the Lord. That everybody is acceptable to God, and is to be invited into the kingdom of God. The key is 'to repent' and 'to trust in God'. That is, to turn around and become like children, for he says: "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 18:3). To be a child of God is to learn to trust in Him totally as a child his father, and the other imperative is to learn to obey and follow the demands of God the father. Quite simply, it is to be merciful as the father is merciful. (Lk 6:26) Or, in concrete words, it is to love your enemies,



and do good to others (v.35). Or as Matthew puts it, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and send rain on the just and on the unjust." (Mt 5:44f). So to the poor, Jesus openly invites them into the kingdom, telling them that their sins can be forgiven, their sickness be healed and they themselves are acceptable in the sight of God. Only when they turn and put their trust in God can they then be the children of God. This is not what they deserve to be, so it is indeed the lovingkindness and the mercy of God that they would be his children, under his divine protection and care. The same gospel is preached to 'the Rich', but the problem may lie on the fact that they think it is too simple for one to be a child of God that they will not accept the criterion Jesus lays down. They would not turn themselves to follow him but they rather trust in the criteria they have set for themselves. As we have found also that 'the Rich', especially the pious ones, cannot imagine how God would accept sinners on the mere fact of their repentance and return. Just like the Prodigal's elder brother, they cannot accept such a lovingkindness act of the father and so we find Jesus in turn criticizes their inability to accept sinners as the merciful father does. Such is his teaching for them: 'Go and learn what it means: I desire



mercy but not sacrifice.' (Mt 9:13)

5. Then we come to the charges he lays on 'the Rich'. He rebukes the rich - the wealthy, the authorities, the theologians and the pious, not because of their mere state of being rich, but because of the injustice that they are practising. They have been misusing the gifts which are given to them. As a matter of fact, the charges Jesus lays rest only upon those who are misusing their privileges. So to the wealthy, Jesus is criticizing against their covetousness, against their storing up of riches for themselves and not doing the will of God as to love one's neighbors as oneself. To the authorities, he comments on their wrong use of the privileges which God has given to them, especially their using the Temple as a market place, for their own service and even as 'a den of robbers'. To the theologians, he condemns also their wrong use of the special knowledge of the Law that they claim to have. They do not expound the law according to the will of God but rather they are using them at their own service. And to the pious too, Jesus is commenting on their wrong attitude of piety, for they are making use of their gifts as means of boasting in themselves and as criterion to reject others. But Jesus is preaching that since we are the children of God we are to love others as God loves them. Since it is the will of the Lord that he says, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice', so we are as his children, to be as merciful as the father is.



For 'the Rich' are striving to keep their own privileges, not knowing that their privileges are not theirs' but are only given to them; and they are handling their privileges for their own benefits, not knowing that it is the demand of God that they should do justice and love others as themselves, and here is the remark of Jesus: 'That servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating.....(for) everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required, and of him to whom men commit much, they will demand the more' (Lk 12:47f). So Jesus turns them to see the injustice they are practising and points them back to the will of God.

6. One further point we should mention too: It is the way how Jesus lives out the will of God. That in his ministry, he says to have come 'not to abolish the law and the prophets ..... but to fulfill them' (Mt 5:17). Yet on the other hand, he has been found to be destructive to the contemporary system upheld by the religious leaders of his days. The point is: Surely he by no means attempts to overthrow the law and the teaching of the prophets, but rather he is positively living out their teachings in practical terms. And it is only in this way of actualizing the will of God that he is found to be destructive to the contemporary spiritualized form of expression. We may see how he differs from the religious leaders of his days. The gospel he brings is about the good



news of the coming of the kingdom. This is also what the people of Israel, especially those religious leaders are hoping for. And from the study of the Old Testament and the inter-testamental background, we understand that it is what they have long been waiting for. As we can see from Luke and Matthew and the whole of the early Church that the coming of Jesus as the Messiah is the fulfillment of what have been said before. In the saying we have quoted in Lk 4:18, the quotation from the Book of Isaiah is indeed what the people have been hopeful for the work of the Messiah - 'to preach good news to the poor..... to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'. From the Isaiah context, the words are spoken in their basic physical and social senses of the deliverance of the Lord. The people are expecting the things to come as they are promised. But the religious leaders have been too much eager to realise the fulfillment that they have set up for themselves and for God too, a new way for the realization. They have linked the realisation of the promises of the Lord with their obedience to His Law. That is, the Kingdom of God would come true only when they have completely obeyed the commandments of the Lord. That is why we have witnessed such dominant fervour led by the Pharisees of the time. But in this way, they have transformed the realization on the one



hand, not solely depending on the gracious act of God, and on the other, making it totally incomprehensible to many who cannot follow their tradition of keeping the Law. As a result, their teachings have become nothing more than 'religious jargon' to the vast common people. Yet when Jesus comes, he brings the realization into the daily experiences of the common mass. That the promises of the Lord are now to be realized in concrete ways in his healing of the sick, the blind, the leper, and casting out of demons, in his forgiving the sins of the people and in his preaching the good news to the poor.<sup>3</sup> The religious leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees could not accept him; they have been talking of the kingdom of God in their own jargon that they do not expect it to be in the way he does.

Also in his preaching of the lovingkindness and mercy of the Lord to man, the religious leaders certainly would accept what Jesus teaches. For the scripture does frequently refer to the Lord as "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (e.g. Ex 34:6, Ps 86:15, 103:8, 145:8, Neh 9:17..... etc.) The Scribes and

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<sup>3</sup> See also discussion in ch.3 esp. in referring to the manifestation of the coming of the kingdom and the significance of Jesus as 'the coming one'.



the Pharisees would not object to this lovingkindness and merciful nature of the Lord. Yet when Jesus actualizes it in concrete ways and brings it into his daily-life-contexts as accepting the sinners, being a friend of them, and even eating with them, and sharing 'table fellowship' with them; that it was in such too realistic form that the Pharisees and the scribes could not accept. For Jesus, he is indeed living according to the will of God, but the religious leaders would think he is going too far that would in turn be harmful to their own teachings. Jesus has extended the lovingkindness of God as far as to the acceptance of sinners into his kingdom. This idea of Jesus was found too revolutionary to the contemporary thinking of the religious leaders of his days. Even for the unique address to God as 'Abbā', it is quite distinctive from the contemporary Jewish thought. The word was in those days a children's word used in everyday talk, but it has never been used by the Jews as a form of address to God. It would have seemed disrespectful, indeed unthinkable for a Jew to address God with this familiar word. Yet Jesus radically uses it in his mouth. He even teaches us to pray to God, "Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come...." (Lk 11:2) That again we see that though the Pharisees and Scribes would agree that they are the children of God they have built too many barriers for men so that God seems too far for them to reach; that though intellectually they would accept



the statement: 'We are the children of God.', still they would not address God in such a human term as Jesus uses. But Jesus brings it in terms of our daily human relationship that we address him as 'Abba', as 'father'. So it is the characteristic we find in the ministry of Jesus that he brings together all the religious terminology and actualizes them in concrete terms of his daily experiences. The religious leaders have been hanging up their scriptural teachings into 'religious jargon' but Jesus brings them out again and visualizes them in more realistic terms.

#### B. Relevance to Our Churches Today

Lastly, to bring the relevance to our churches today, I find it desperately needed to some of our Christian churches to realize the danger of turning back to the Pharisaic and Rabbinic interpretation of the Christian message. From our study of the concept of '19 and its developments we have understood the basic message as saying of the Lord's concern to the poor is basically a message to those who are poor in the physical and social sense. That is, the message is realistic in daily human experience. Jesus has also brought his message real to our human experiences that according to his preaching, it is on the human level that we are to experience and to express the love of God, to do justice and have mercy to our fellow men. Jesus has actualized the good news of the kingdom of God by accepting sinners, being a friend of them,



and even by eating with sinners and tax-collectors, thus openly sharing 'table-fellowship' with them, and also by inviting them into the kingdom of God. And as we are Christians following the way of Jesus, let us follow him in bringing real the good news of the kingdom of God to our fellow men in realistic terms as Jesus does in his time. And on the other hand, there exists also in some part of our Christian Churches the emphasis laying too much on the social and political aspects of the salvation of God. That they need to be aware of not swinging into this other extreme of interpreting the Christian message. Indeed as we have seen the kingdom of God will bring forth a complete salvation which includes also the social and political deliverances. Yet the fact that Jesus does not agree with the views of the zealots, the political radicals of his time, signifies his conviction that political struggles would not bring forth the realization of the coming of kingdom of God. Rather he is actualizing the deliverance of man in terms of re-establishing their relationship with God. He is actively inviting people to return and become like children before God. For only in this way will a man experience his totally freedom and total salvation in God.

As to the mission of the Church, we have seen the mission of Jesus as to both the poor and the rich. Though he has a special mission to the poor and the needy, yet he is not without a mission to the rich. For the mission to the poor, the Church



should teach the people to care and concern for them. Since it is the special concern of the Lord that he cares and concerns for the poor and the needy, so as the children of God, we cannot but follow the way as our father has been doing. So, 'Be merciful, even as your father is merciful'. And directly to the poor, the Church should proclaim the loving care and concern of the Lord and tell them to learn to trust in God. 'Learn to be a child of God' 'Do not be anxious about your life' 'For a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.' Rather from their too much concern about their own needs, the Church should turn their attention to God's providence for their needs and their concern to be a concern that is for others. For as the children of God, they need not worry about their own needs - 'The Father know that you need them', but rather they are to seek the Father's kingdom, to obey his will, to love God and love others as themselves. We may as well note also that it is not a gospel to comfort the poor nor to make them happy with their state, as it has been the criticism put forth by the Maxists, but it is a gospel that changes their attitudes of concerning themselves to the concern of others and it is also a gospel that points them to the proper relationship with God the father.

And for the mission to the Rich, the Church should point to them also the demands of the Lord. She should turn them from their too much concern about their own welfare to



the care for the needs of others. So teach them: 'Do not be covetous' 'Do not be anxious about your life too' 'For a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possession.' But rather, more positively, 'Sell what you have and give it to the poor.', as an act of 'doing justice and practising the mercy of God'. For it is really injustice for one to store up wealth for oneself while others are in need yet not give a hand to them. Thus they have to learn to 'Love God, and love their neighbors as themselves'. The Demand of Jesus to the rich is as challenging as that to the poor. For he is seriously criticising their misuse of their gifts from God which reflects their misunderstanding of or their refusal to obey the will of God. So he tells them: "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, but not sacrifice.'" And again it is the gospel not to comfort the rich by allowing their covetousness and self-centredness, but it is a gospel that directs their concern to the service for others not for their own benefits, and it is also a gospel that points their responsibility directly to God who has granted their privileges. Moreover, all these are to be actualized in concrete ways, to be seen in our practical daily lives.

- End -



## APPENDIX I      Terminology In Synoptics

### A. The Gospel usage of 'chief priests, scribes and elders'.

From the background we have studied, we understand that the Sanhedrin was composed of the chief priests, the elders and the scribes. They are in actual fact the social and religious leaders of the time. And in the gospels, they are also mentioned as 'the chief priests, the elders and the scribes' (e.g. Lk 9:22//Mk 8:31//Mt 16:21). Yet, sometimes we do find they are simply referred to as 'the chief priests and the elders'. For instance, in Mt 27:1 where it says - "All the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death", but in fact it is referring to the whole council. The parallel passage in Mk 15 affirms it, saying - "the chief priests, with the elders and scribes, and the whole council held a consultation". Also in the occasion when Jesus was questioned about his authority after the cleansing of the Temple, he was questioned, according to Matthew, by 'the chief priests and the elders of the people' (Mt 21:23); whereas according to Mark and Luke, they are 'the chief priests, the scribes and the elders' (Mk 11:27//Lk 20:1).# Or, in some cases, the gospel

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# It seems Matthew likes to drop out 'scribes' from the group in several occasions, the reason being not clear. Sometimes, he has 'chief priests and elders' for 'chief priests and elders and scribes', e.g. cf. Mt 27:1 // Mk 15:1; Mt 21:23 // Mk 11:27 // Lk 20:1. Sometimes, it is for 'chief priests and scribes', e.g. cf. Mt 26:3 // Mk 14:1 // Lk 22:2; Mt 27:12 // Lk 23:10. Or he has the tendency to use 'chief priests and elders' for the whole group in Sanhedrin. Does he have sympathy on the scribes that he drops it off from the group of people against Jesus? Jeremias has



writers use 'chief priests and the scribes' to describe the same group, e.g. Mk 14:1//Lk 22:2.# Also in one of the passion announcement passages, only the chief priests and the scribes are referred, without the mention of the elders (Mt 20:18//Mk 10:33). Yet, no one would refute that the elders are also included into the group.## Even the term 'chief priests and Pharisees' has been used together as referring to the same group of people in Sanhedrin too. For example, Mt 21:45 says - 'the chief priests and the Pharisees'; whereas Lk 20:19 says - 'the chief priests and the scribes'. And when we study the immediate context in the gospels we find that they are certainly referring to the same group of people in the Sanhedrin. Mk 12:12 on the other hand, uses a personal pronoun 'they' instead, but he is too referring to the same group as mentioned in Mk 11:27 where is 'the chief priests, the scribes and the elders'; thus confirms the statement just said. Another instance of the occurrence of 'chief priests

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once remarked that the word 'elders' in a wider sense might mean the non-priestly members of the Sanhedrin, thus including both 'elders and scribes' together. See Jerusalem p.222n. If it is true, then Matthew's usage may be for the sake of conciseness and 'elders' is used in the wider sense.

# cf. Mt 26:3 where he uses 'chief priests and elders' instead and probably they are speaking of the same group who wanted to destroy Jesus. Matthew likes to use 'chief priests and elders' frequently for the group. See the above note too.

## cf. the other passages concerning the passion announcement in Lk 9:22 //Mk 8:31//Mt 16:21, and certainly both announcements are speaking of the same group.



and Pharisees' is in Mt 27:62 where it says - "The next day after the crucifixion of Jesus, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together before Pilate and discuss on setting guards of soldiers for the tomb." There is probably speaking of the same group of people too.<sup>#</sup> So in referring to these different groups of people in the gospels, we have to take heed and look into the context in order to tell what people they are really referring to.

#### B. The Gospel usage of 'the scribes and the Pharisees'.

The same caution is needed for the distinction of the scribes and the Pharisees. We have made an attempt to distinguish them that the former belongs to the group of theologians and the latter to men of practice. But when the two term are used in the gospels, they are in many cases put together as though they are the same group. Only in Luke, when he puts Jesus' criticism on the scribes and the Pharisees, he separates the two respectively as the theologians and as the men of practice. Thus he says, to the theologians Jesus commented, "Woe to you lawyers" (Lk 11:46), or "Beware of the scribes....." (Lk 20:46f); and to the men of practice he commented, "Woe to you Pharisees....." (Lk 11:42ff) and "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (Lk 12:1). Yet in Matthew,

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<sup>#</sup> The phrase 'chief priests and the Pharisees' seems quite strange and has been only used by Matthew alone, twice as have been mentioned above. The reason has been unclear too.

the two groups have been combined indiscriminably as one. Especially in Matthew 23, Jesus several times lays criticisms on them, saying - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites....." (Mt 23:13,15,26,27,29).# So in our study we have to make some effort to distinguish them again. Indeed, Luke has given us a good guideline for when he recalls the discourses of Jesus, he has made quite a clear distinction in the charges against the scribes as the theologians (Lk 11:46-52;20:46f) and against the Pharisees as the men of practice (Lk 11:39-44).## Besides this fact that there exist such a lumping together of 'the scribes and the Pharisees' in the discourses of Jesus, strangely also there is such a confusion in the narrative stories too. This we find especially in Luke's gospel. To give some illustrations, we may compare the stories in Luke with the parallels in the other gospels. One instance, in Lk 5:17,20 is the story about Jesus' healing of a paralytic; Luke gives the scene that 'there were

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# Or, actually in Matthew's writing of the gospel he was not concerned with the historical figures as who the scribes and the Pharisees were, but rather he was putting them as portrayal of hypocritical life in church and he was fighting against this kind of tendency within the church. See also Fenton's comment in St. Matthew pp.364ff. Thus we have to seek hints from Mark and Luke for the separation. cf. also Jeremias' distinction, Jerusalem pp252ff.

## The Lucan records serves as a sound base for us to make such distinction and this is also the base chosen by Jeremias, op.cit. pp.252ff.



Pharisees and teachers of the Law sitting by who had come from every villages of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem'##. But both Mark and Matthew simply say that there were 'some of the scribes' there. Some other instances are found in Lk 5:17//Mk 3:2//Mt 12:10; Lk 7:30, 11:53, 14:3, 15:2. One another instance which suggests for us some light out of the confusion is the occasion of Jesus' eating with tax-collectors and sinners. There Luke says : the Pharisees and their scribes saw that they murmured at Jesus'disciples, asking why their teacher does so(Lk 5:30). But Mark and Matthew give a slightly different picture. Mark recalls that they were 'the scribes of the Pharisees'####, that is, 'the scribes who belonged to the Pharisaic party'.###@ But Matthew puts it simply 'the Pharisees'.#@@ Against these differences among the three accounts, especially those in

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# Lk 5:17, 'teachers of Law' is the term Luke uses for 'the scribes'. See Caird, St. Luke p.93. Also v.20 has 'the scribes and the Pharisees'; thus affirms this explanation. Cf. also Mk 2:6 // Mt 9:3.

## Lk 5:29ff//Mk 2:15ff//Mt 9:10ff. The place of this incidence is not explicitly shown in Mt. and Mark, but Luke states clearly that it was in Levi's house.

### Mk 2:16. Codex Alexandrianus and Vaticanus et al. have 'the scribes and the Pharisees' which is more closer to the Lucan account.

##@ See Cranfield, Mark p.104f. Thus, it is the same as 'the teachers of the Pharisaic party'; and the modern term for it is 'the theologians' Cf. also Cecil Hargreaves, Notes on The Translation and Text of St. Mark's Gospel in Greek p.21.

#@@ Mt 9:11. It may be due to Matthew's way of making the things concise or, in his mind he simply does not make any distinction for the two groups. Cf.also Matthew's record of Jesus' discourses in Mt 23.

Luke and Mark, we can thus trace the distinction of using of 'the scribes' and 'the Pharisees'. For while Mark has 'the scribes of the Pharisees', Luke states in other words 'the Pharisees and their scribes', i.e., 'they are the scribes who belong to the Pharisaic group' and 'the teachers of the Pharisees'. Or in other word, the scribes within the Pharisaic group are in fact their theologians. The incidence here supports the distinction Jeremias has proposed that the scribes are the theologians and the Pharisees are the men of practice. Such distinction is also supported by the passage in Mk 1:22//Mt 7:29 where the teaching of Jesus is commented as 'not as the scribes', i.e. it reflects the status of the scribes as teachers. Also the mention of the Pharisees are frequently with matters concerning the keeping of their laws and traditions, e.g. On fasting (Mt 9:14//Mk 2:18//Lk 5:33), On keeping the Sabbath (Mt 12:2//Mk 2:24//Lk 6:2) and others too. Thus, we may now speak of them altogether as within the party of the Pharisees as Matthew always does, but when speak of them separately, we may take the scribes as the teachers, the theologians and the Pharisees as the men of practice, the pious group.



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